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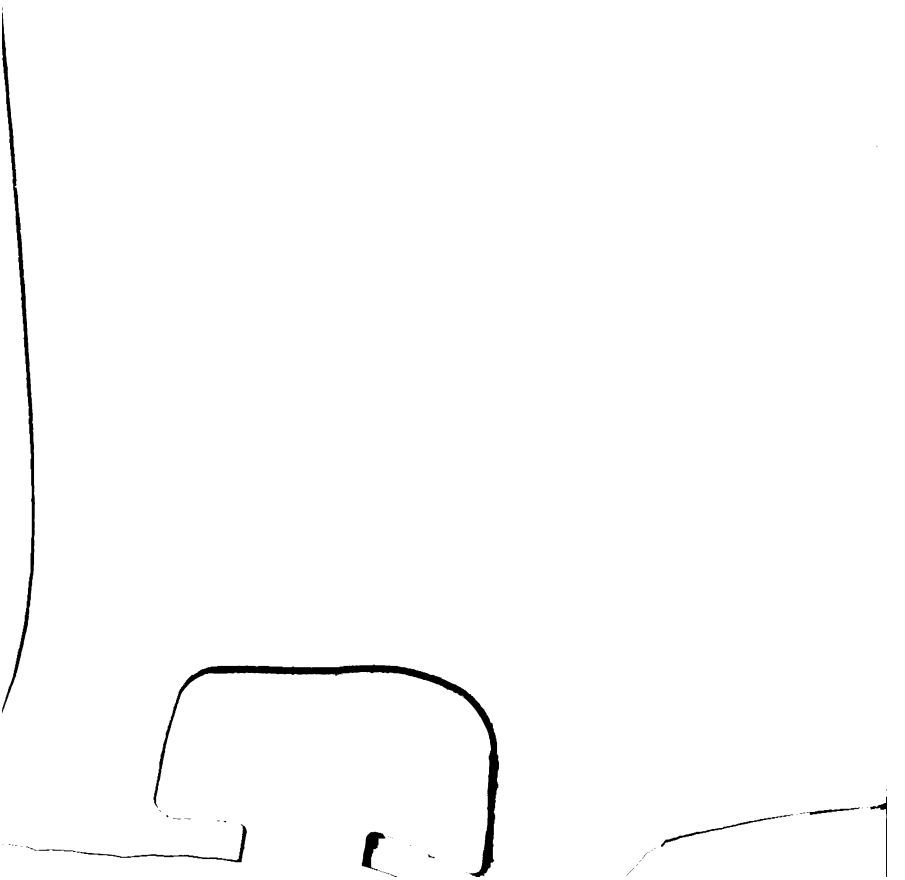
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KARL OF ERBACH

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

This story appeared in *Longmans' Magazine* under the title "Prince Karl." It was subsequently discovered, however, that this had previously been used as a title for a play written by Mr. Archibald C. Gunter. In consequence the book has been entitled "Karl of Erbach."

KARL OF ERBACH

A TALE OF LICHTENSTEIN AND SOLGAU

BY

H. C. BAILEY

AUTHOR OF 'MY LADY OF ORANGE,' ETC.

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KARL OF ERBACH

CHAPTER I

A FORAY IN SOLGAU

It is almost three hundred years since Gustavus fell dead on Lützen field, and his yellow-coats flung themselves at Wallenstein's squares and died to rescue the king of whose death they did not know; almost three hundred years since the dark February night at Eger when Wallenstein found death from the hands of the men he had honoured and trusted. The fame of these men, and the fame of others like them, still endure, and grow greater as the years go by: no new praise can serve them much and no new blame can harm them. But there were other men who worked through the Thirty Years' War who won no great battles, who laid no country waste, and yet deserve some honour from a later time. You may believe if you choose that little but what is tiresome can come of a story which tells of one man who thought the glory of

Wallenstein and Tilly not worth the winning. Yet if you knew Karl of Erbach as I know him you might well sneer because I tell his story ill, but you would not deny that his story was one to be told.

On a May morning long ago Karl, Count of Erbach, stood on the terrace of Solgau Castle looking down into the pool beneath. He dropped a pebble carelessly, and the deep grey water laughed in the sunlight. With his hands on the battlements he stood still watching, and his eyes brightened as he looked. Slowly the water grew smooth and still and dark, and his brows bent. Behind him a girl swept lightly down the terrace, smiled as she saw him, and sat silently on a stone hard by. He stood there, still, tall, and square, a dark bluff figure in the sunlight, insensible of her; she thought of all those things, and behind the smile on her lips there was a faint pitiful little sigh. But the pity was for him. He broke a tiny piece of stone from the battlements and flung it down again; as the ripples answered his lips curved into a smile that struggled to be a sneer. The Count of Erbach was aware that he was at work on child's play.

'If only I were a fish!' the girl murmured.

Karl, Count of Erbach, turned quickly and his sneer fled.

'I did not know you were here,' said he. The girl swept him a curtsey.

'I ask pardon of the fishes, Count of Erbach,' said she.

'It was not the fishes, Yolande,' Karl said solemnly. There was a pause.

'Oh, why do you always mean just what you say?' cried Yolande.

'But the pool is just like your eyes,' said Karl.

The laugh died on her lips, and a flush crept up her white throat.

'I did not see you, because — why, because I always see you,' said Karl quickly. His eyes were on fire, he caught her hand and his breath came fast. 'Yolande, Yolande, you must know ——'

'Ah, no!' she cried, and struggled to free her hand. 'No; you must not say it! What right have you?'

'That is for you to say,' he said slowly. She did not answer. 'My love, my love, you will let me claim it ——'

'No, no!' she said, quickly, and sprang away from his arm. 'See! all over Germany men have done things, great things; and who has had a share in them from Solgau?' She paused for a moment, and he stood silent looking away over the woods and the rich meadowland where the cattle were

feeding thick. 'And you could, Karl, you could,' she murmured, and she looked up into his face with eyes that said what he wanted most to hear. But he did not look in her eyes, and he spoke slowly, looking still across the countryside.

'There is nothing I have ever done gives me the right,' he said.

'Why? why?' she asked quickly. 'You — you could persuade the Prince to fight — join the Duke of Weimar. You might be a greater than he. You do not try at all. Why, Karl? Will you for — for —?' She laid her hand on his arm.

'I could persuade the Prince to fight. Solgau might join the war,' he said slowly. 'If I would not do it even for you, Yolande, it is because ——'

'Oh, because it is too hard — because it is too dangerous — because — because you would rather be quiet and comfortable and lazy,' she cried.

'That is not why,' he said. He pointed away over the quiet smiling fields: 'That is why. War means glory —' he looked down at her, 'Glory? yes, and war means Magdeburg too, Yolande, the father dead in the doorway — the children tossed from the windows on to pikes.'

She shuddered and looked up into his face with quivering lips. There was nothing new to her in

the words, but his voice throbbed as he spoke, and the words rang true. She knew that she must believe him. For one moment she met his eyes, and did not dare look again. Then very gently his arm passed round her and he drew her to him:

'My love, it's little I have ever done——' he whispered.

'Yolande, Yolande,' cried a gay voice. Running down the terrace came a girl with hair as bright as the sunshine. The lines of her close habit swayed lithely as she came towards them. 'Yolande, Yolande!' she cried again.

Yolande stepped back flushing darkly. Karl turned quickly on his heel and forced a smile.

'Well, will you come, Count?' cried the girl.

'Beyond doubt, your Highness,' said the Count of Erbach.

The Princess Dorothea looked from one to the other:

'Then you have had my message?' she said, looking at Karl from under her eyelashes. He stepped in front of Yolande.

'Your Highness was good enough to bid me come,' said he.

'But I should have asked you to come somewhere, shouldn't I?' said the Princess.

'That was the point at which we had not arrived,'

said the Count of Erbach. 'Your Highness's commands were sufficient for me and ——'

'So you were not anxious to know what they were?'

The Count of Erbach bowed.

'The command would in any case be obeyed,' said he; and over his shoulder he saw that Yolande had gone.

'But in fact, I was explaining to the Lady Yolande the policy of his Highness your father,' he added.

'The policy of the Count of Erbach is most subtle,' said the Princess. But the Count of Erbach did not smile. 'My father has often said so,' she remarked.

'State policy is a most interesting study,' said the Count.

'Oh — State policy!' said the Princess. 'I suppose you could obey me more easily if you knew what to do?'

'At least more speedily,' said Karl gravely.

'Will you give us your escort on a ride to Waldkirch, then?'

'I am your Highness's servant.'

Karl strode away down the terrace staring with open eyes at the ground. He had learnt much that morning, but he was troubled to guess what his new knowledge meant. The Lady Yolande of Rosenberg

would have him play a great part in Germany. Neither then nor afterwards did Karl doubt that he could have played such a part well; and indeed the playing would have been much to his taste. All around him less men than he, as he knew well enough, were carving for themselves name and honour and wealth out of the weak States and the weary people and the ravaged lands of Germany. To meet the rough sneer of a robber captain made prince by his sword arm was well enough before men; when Yolande looked on and her eyes glowed and her cheeks flushed at some brave story of leaguer or foray, it was not too easy to sit silent and find his only reward in the rich fields and happy peasants of Solgau. And now he knew that it was something more than a girl's idle fancy which made her snatch at every tale of Bernhard of Weimar — ay, even of the Prince von Lichtenstein. As that name passed into his mind his face set and he frowned. Such another as Ludwig von Lichtenstein she would have him be. And six years ago his father was murdered on the Lichtenstein border and the murderers were not found. He could remember his father's man-at-arms, the gruff rude Scotsman, staggering wounded up at the hall at Erbach clutching at the table to steady himself and crying:

'Lady, the Count died fighting.'

He saw his mother's pale face again, saw the sob break in her throat as she rose and fell back into her chair. He remembered the sad little company that came to the castle in the morning with his father's body in the midst; he remembered the long night when he watched dry-eyed over the two that had loved each other so well in life; he saw the great grey granite cross on the hill at Erbach where her counts and their ladies lie buried.

Of such things the name of Lichtenstein had ever made him think since his father, the bitterest enemy of alliance with Lichtenstein, was murdered on the Lichtenstein marches by men unknown. After that murder Ludwig, the young swarthy Lichtenstein prince, rode into Solgau seeking alliance now that the hindrance was gone. Then the new Count of Erbach hurried to Solgau clad all in black, and stood in his father's place by the side of Prince Eberhard.

'By the favour of your Highness,' he said; and he bowed low to Prince Eberhard; but his eyes were on Ludwig, and Ludwig guessed his meaning. He had no love for the Prince von Lichtenstein, but his hate was his own affair, and nought to do with the realm of Solgau; so standing at Prince Eberhard's ear, a strong man by a weak, he kept Solgau peaceful

and happy while all around war and the misery of war bit deep into the heart of the land. Now as he walked slowly along the terrace, he knew or he thought he knew that in the eyes of her who was the only judge he admitted on earth — he knew that in her eyes he was wrong. Again and again he asked himself what that knowledge meant to him; he could not drag Solgau to ruin to please a girl, for he bore his father's name. But if she thought him wrong — why if she thought him wrong . . . her eyes were dark and glistening.

When he came to the great gate of the castle they were all mounted and ready, and his eyes went to Yolande as she sat, tall and stately, with her face in dark shadow under a drooping hat.

'And have you been discussing politics again?' cried the Princess.

'No, no, sis,' cried Prince Maximilian. 'Karl has been trying on his green tafeta and his purple velvet ——'

'And the rest of your clothes, Max,' said the Count of Erbach.

As they cantered down through the woods, clouds were gathering thick from the southward, but the sun was still bright overhead, and the woods shone with their earliest colours. The Princess glanced back:

'One — two — four grooms! Indeed, Count, you are too careful,' she cried, with a toss of her dainty head.

'That is impossible,' said Karl with a low bow.

'And do people hate me so much?' she answered pouting.

'There are knaves — even in the lands of the Princess Dorothea.'

And it would be so dreadful if anything happened to — Yolande,' she cried, looking up at him with a roguish smile.

'Your Highness would of course be grieved.'

Princess Dorothea looked at the big man from head to toe:

'Indeed I don't know whether it is more tiresome to mean what you say very much or not to mean it at all!' she declared.

'Your Highness has of course done both,' said Karl gravely.

'But it is most tiresome to be treated like a child.'

Karl gave her a long steady look with a touch of sternness.

'I am most anxious to do that no more,' said he.

'And now you are being very serious,' cried the Princess sadly. Karl shifted uneasily in his saddle.

'It is my way to think of the serious things,' he said quietly, 'and they are tiresome enough. If I

talk of them too much I tsk pardon of — Dorothea. But sometimes one must speak to — the Princess.'

'Oh!' said Dorothea with a sigh, 'the Princess is a great trial. I always try to forget her.'

'Then others may do that too,' said Karl. The girl shivered a little, and looked up at him with tears just coming in her eyes. He looked down into the sweet delicate face. 'No one will ever forget Dorothea,' he said and smiled at her.

'Not if the Count of Erbach makes her a compliment,' she cried gaily. 'Is it the very first? Oh, no: the terrace!'

'I merely expressed my devotion to your Highness.'

'Oh, to me?' cried Dorothea.

'Which is always sincere.'

'Even then?' she said, with a sidelong glance, and then suddenly the smile flitted away from her face. 'You must forgive me. I talk without thinking.' He sat silent.

'And I often think without talking,' said he; 'for which most people are grateful.'

'Indeed you can talk very nicely,' the Princess declared.

'Few would believe it, even on the word of a Princess.' Suddenly he stood up in his stirrups.

The smile died out of his face and he peered forward through the sunlight with his hand shading his eyes. He shouted to two of the grooms and they spurred quickly forward. They had come almost through the wood, and below them lay a gentle furrowed slope of cornland and meadow. The Prince and Yolande had stopped, and they too were looking at a grey cloud of smoke that rose from a farmsteading not far away. Through the smoke they could see men and horses moving quickly and they heard hoarse cries borne up the wind.

Max turned as Karl rode up.

'And this, most noble, would seem to be a foray into the very peaceful land of Solgau,' said he with a smile. 'Oh, Karl, you councillor of peace——!'

'Keep back in the trees with the women!' said Karl sharply.

The two grooms were half way down the hill already. The horsemen at the farm saw them and gathered together; then, as a groom turned and shouted to Karl, they galloped away southwards, towards the land of Hornberg. Karl rode after his grooms, cantering down the hill till they came together to the burning house. The ricks were alight, and the poor rough household goods scattered about the trampled flower-beds. At the farm-

yard gate lay a man bleeding from many wounds, and by him knelt a woman sobbing and kissing his pale lips. Her dress was all awry, and she cowered and shuddered as Karl and his men drew up. Karl's Scotch man-at-arms growled out an oath and trotted round the house; the other sat stolidly watching as Karl sprang down. He knelt on one knee by the woman's side, put his hand on her head, and:

'My poor lass, who was it?' he said. She looked up at him fearfully with big wild eyes.

'Pappenheimers! Pappenheimers!' she shrieked, and then she fell across the dead body and hugged it to her. 'My man, my man!' she sobbed. Her eyes were dry.

For a moment Karl stayed watching her, then he turned with a white frowning face to find Max and the two girls behind him.

'Go back,' he said sharply. 'There may be danger yet.' They did not move.

'You were the man,' said Max pointing at Karl with his whip, 'you were the man who would have no talk of war, no thought of alliance — oh, a champion of peace!' He contrived, just then, an excuse for forgetting that war meant such things everywhere. And another, who might have known better, cried:

'The Count of Erbach loves quiet!' And Yolande's lip curled and her eyes flashed at the man who chose his own way. She sprang from her horse and ran to the woman who lay sobbing in the mire. Yolande put an arm round her, and the woman shrank at the touch; but then she looked up and saw Yolande's face, and she came eagerly to her bosom and cried at last.

From Waldkirch a crowd of shouting ill-armed country folk had hurried, and they busied themselves with the burning house. The Scotchman came back to Karl.

'Stock almost all left, sir,' said he. Karl did not answer; and the man took command of the villagers, working as if the house were his own. The dead body was covered and borne away, and the woman who could not leave it, and yet could not leave Yolande, walked slowly and unsteadily within the clasp of Yolande's arm. At last Karl called his Scotchman:

'Jock, did you see them?' said he.

'Ay, sir. Pappenheim's colours: Pappenheim's coats. But —— humph ——!'

'What then?'

'No Pappenheimer ever left a pig behind!'

Karl stood biting his lip, looking away southward. At last:

'Go, tell the Lady Yolande I will bring her an escort from Solgau,' said he.

'So these be the fruits of peace and quietness, Karl,' said Max at his elbow. 'And, faith, I believe Yolande thinks with me.' Karl turned on him sharply.

'Where is your sister?'

'Oh, back in the wood. She doesn't love blood — except in a tale.'

'The Lady Yolande, sir — umph, the Lady Yolande, sir, desires no escort from the Count of Erbach,' said the Scotchman, backing his horse.

'Ho, ho, Karl; fair and full!' cried Max. 'Here's someone you'll listen to.' And the Count of Erbach muttered an oath.

Clouds had gathered thickly, and the whole sky was overcast. Gloomy and silent, Karl rode back through the wood, sometimes answering, sometimes scarcely hearing, his companions.

'Well, you might let us have an alliance with Lichtenstein,' Max cried peevishly. Karl was not pretending to hear. 'That would save the border from this.'

'Ah,' said Karl indifferently. He did not take his policy from Prince Maximilian — not even from Yolande.

It was nearing sundown when they came to the castle again, and suddenly away in the west the cloud drifts parted, a ray of silver light shot from under a heavy blue cloud, and shone down on the gilded vane of Rosenberg Castle. The light flashed back over meadow and woodland, and Karl saw it at Solgau and scarcely heeded it then.

CHAPTER II

THE GUESTS OF LUDWIG VON LICHTENSTEIN

'YES, yes, Karl; like father like son: *O patre duro fili durior* — you read your Flaccus still? A great writer, Karl, a very great writer; one of those who — *justum et tenacem propositi virum* — my own case, Karl. You shall not shake me from my purpose. It is seldom I maintain a point strenuously; and it becomes me to confess that frequently I have known your opinions to be just. But yes, yes, Karl — *o patre duro* — sterner son of a stern father — my mind is made up. If I were always to yield; why, if I were always to yield — if I were ——' the sentence of his Highness the Prince Eberhard expired with a mutter.

'Your Highness is resolved to go?' said the Count of Erbach, quietly.

'Assuredly, Karl. It is not often — seldom, indeed,' said Prince Eberhard solemnly, 'seldom that I maintain a — ahem! Yes, Karl. There are moments in the history of a realm when it is not only necessary, but — er, but becoming that the pilot —

does not the old Greek call kings pilots? — should — should — should — and this is one, Karl, this is one.'

'It is beyond doubt for your Highness to decide whether you will visit Lichtenstein or stay at home,' said the Count of Erbach.

'Precisely, Karl. This is — er — one — one. This is one,' Prince Eberhard repeated and Karl withdrew with a bow.

Long afterwards, when Karl of Erbach looked back on his early years at Solgau, he found, perhaps, like other men, a good deal to regret and some little cause to repent of this or that; but oftenest among these things he thought of the time when the grave on Erbach hill had kept him from eating the bread of the Prince von Lichtenstein. But if his life were to live again, he would do as he did then. He stayed at Solgau.

On the way from Solgau to Lichtenstein, and within the Lichtenstein borders, a strange thing befell the company of Prince Eberhard. From out of a copse a troop of Pappenheim's riders swept down upon them with loud yells and firings of pistols and brandishings of swords; and Prince Eberhard's company, who were in no wise ready for fighting, huddled and hustled together, like sheep before a dog. The Princess Dorothea was cut off

from the rest in the first wild rush, and one rough trooper caught at her rein, and another had his arm round her. She cried to her brother, who struggled to find his pistols. Never were men so unready as the men Prince Eberhard led. In front, on the hill-top, a bugle blew clear and shrill, and racing down the hill came the Lichtenstein cuirassiers, with Prince Ludwig himself at their head. The Pappenheimers did not wait to stand the charge. One of them snatched a kiss from Dorothea, and rode off with a hoarse laugh. Prince Ludwig dashed up to her, threw his horse on its haunches.

'Your Highness is unhurt,' he cried.

Between her tears, 'No, no; he did not hurt me,' she sobbed.

'The cursed ruffian!' said Prince Ludwig angrily. Dorothea gave a little gasping laugh.

'Why? Because he didn't?' she asked.

'I would have given half my kingdom that this should never have been,' cried the Prince. 'And yet — I am happy to have been able to do even so little as this for your Highness.' His glance spoke admiration, and even more; but the Princess was young, and she lifted her innocent eyes to his.

'But indeed it was not a little,' she said, and blushed.

'I have to offer my gratitude to your Highness

for — for ——' quoth Prince Eberhard, with an indistinct gesture to end his sentence. Ludwig bowed low.

'I am distressed that there should have been need,' said he. 'May I assure your Highness of a sufficient escort now?' And in high contentment Prince Eberhard moved on to the castle of Lichtenstein. More than once Dorothea's eyes sought Ludwig, as he rode jauntily along, with a word ever ready to patch her father's sentences and a glance for her that brought the blood to her cheeks.

Now all this while, behind a clump of trees on a hill to the northward, another troop had halted that rode in array other than Prince Eberhard's. In front and flank and rear of the main body men rode alone, watching carefully all around, and early they caught a glint of steel from the copse whence the Pappenheimers came. A halt was called, and two men, gay in velvet and lace, came forward to see.

'A most charming ambush — eh, Lormont? But scarcely in our path. Ah! I see; for our friends from Solgau. Now who lies in wait for our very dear friends from Solgau?' His companion yawned.

'If you were more lazy, Turenne, or I were less, we should be happier,' said he. 'I decline to consider your very dear friends from Solgau — a barbarous name!'

Turenne laughed.

'My dear —— Ah! the actors increase. Now, it is very foolish to sit on a grey horse on a hill.'

'And in the sun,' said Lormont.

The Pappenheimers charged.

'Our friends from Solgau appear distressed.'

'Must we charge all that way to assist your charming friends from — er — S.?'

'Ah! our grey horse waits for the ambush to discover itself! He sounds a bugle! And — and a whole regiment charges! A most interesting and edifying spectacle!'

'They will become very hot,' said Lormont.

'A very charming play!' said Turenne. 'The ambush has run away; the cuirassiers are too lazy to run after it; everyone is safe, and His Most Exalted Highness the Prince von Lichtenstein is receiving the reward of valour. Now, I wonder how those cuirassiers came to be here, Lormont?'

'I am distressed to hear it,' drawled Lormont. 'You will insist on my wondering too, and that is most fatiguing.'

'Ludwig von Lichtenstein is — is he perhaps a dramatist? Lormont, you have seen a most romantic comedy!'

'Your dear friend Ludwig has been anticipated in his vocation,' said Lormont.

'But not surpassed, Lormont.'

'Ah, we mean different things; we always do. I mean — the other devil existed first.' Lormont flicked a speck of dust from his laced jacket and yawned delicately.

'You know him?' Turenne asked quickly.

'God forbid!' murmured Lormont. 'His eyes are green — ugh! green, my dear Henri, like that distressing cloak of yours. Shall we talk of something pleasant?'

The sun had scarcely set when Prince Eberhard and his host came to Lichtenstein Castle, but already the windows were ablaze with light, and men clad in the yellow and black of Lichtenstein stood, flaming torches in hand, in a long row across the courtyard. Trumpets roared a welcome as Prince Eberhard rode slowly over the drawbridge, and Ludwig von Lichtenstein wheeled his horse round in the courtyard and bowed to his very saddle.

'I welcome the House of Solgau,' he cried. 'May this day be in your memory as in mine.'

'Our memory, your Highness, must, of course, be tinged with — er ——' quoth Prince Eberhard, and committed his sentence to a wave of the hand. So if Prince Ludwig smiled for a moment, he had a reason.

The hall of audience at Lichtenstein was gay with

jewels and bright dresses; there were many of the nobles of Lichtenstein come to do honour to the Prince of Solgau. Prince Ludwig moved quickly here and there among the crowd, leaving a laugh behind him with the men, with gay looks following him from the women. By her father sat the Princess Dorothea, and the eyes of many men sought her lovely face and dwelt on its dainty curves that were still flushed by the breeze. The Princess Dorothea was very happy; she had had a charming adventure, and before her was a very pretty show, and Ludwig von Lichtenstein had looked at her once — twice — oh! she had given up counting. The trumpets blew loudly again; a loud voice cried in the doorway:

'The Envoy of his Majesty the Most Christian King!'

Prince Ludwig passed quickly to the daïs at the end of the hall. The talking and laughing died away, and there was a long silent pause. Then up through the middle of the gay courtier crowd, walking slowly, with his eyes on the ground, came a tall, bent figure clad in a friar's rough gown. Behind followed his suite blazing with jewels and gold, throwing arch smiling glances at the ladies of Lichtenstein. But their leader seemed to see nothing. He bowed low to Ludwig:

'I am happy to greet your Highness,' said he, and Ludwig bowed solemnly in answer. 'I had scarcely hoped your Highness would have returned. It was said you were — on the marches of Solgau,' and from under his heavy eyebrows he set his eyes on Ludwig.

'Rumour ever lies, my dear father,' said Ludwig airily.

'Sometimes at least,' said the monk. 'But I had heard of forays on which I knew your Highness must attend.' Ludwig looked at him sharply, and the monk dropped his eyes at once: 'It is well that rumour did not know the truth,' said he.

Behind him Lormont yawned vastly in the shadow of a jewelled finger.

'Our most holy father grows strangely tedious, Turenne,' he murmured. 'Eh? my dear friend, you sleep too heavily — oh! Venus the well-beloved! What way is this to eye a girl?'

Turenne was looking, like more than one man, at the Princess Dorothea; and his cold keen eyes kindled as he looked. He did not answer Lormont, and Lormont sighed gently and yawned again.

The Prince von Lichtenstein gave his guests a banquet in the great hall, and Solgau and Lichtenstein drank to each other, drank in all sincerity, and drank deep. There were many gay all down

the long tables, and Prince Ludwig the gayest of all. It was the first time for many years, he cried, that a Prince of Solgau had taken aught from Lichtenstein. And Prince Ludwig prayed to his God that it might not be the last.

'Such prayers must surely be heard,' said the monk gravely.

Prince Ludwig half turned in his seat.

'I give you the health of our ally,' he cried. 'To the welfare and glory of the Most Christian King!' and even the men of Solgau who were no man's allies sprang to their feet and drank. The laughing cries sank to silence, and from the high table rose Père Joseph, the Envoy of France, drawing his dull brown frock about him.

'If I had not known before how much my master was loved in Lichtenstein and Solgau, I should have learnt to-night,' he said gravely. 'For your affection and your cheers I thank you as he would, and in his name I drink — to the honour and faith of Prince Ludwig von Lichtenstein'; and very solemnly he drank his toast.

Prince Ludwig rose from the table early to lead the dance in the audience hall.

'Your Highness will grant excuse to my gown?' said Père Joseph quietly, and turned away. He looked round his suite.

'The Vicomte de Turenne is at play, sir,' Lormont said coolly.

'Then I will trouble you, Lormont.'

'I am truly honoured,' murmured Lormont.

As they passed along the corridors Lormont lagged behind a moment and whispered to two of the escort. When they passed into Père Joseph's room the two stood on guard without.

'You are at pains to be careful, Lormont,' said Père Joseph.

'It is probably less trouble, sir, in the castle of Lichtenstein.'

The Capuchin sat down, and was silent for a moment while his fingers drummed on the table. He looked keenly at Lormont:

'You do not trust the Prince von Lichtenstein?'

'Who, I, sir?' drawled Lormont. 'I would trust the Prince von Lichtenstein with — his own honour.'

'Ah!' said the Capuchin slowly, and there was silence again while Lormont played with his ruffles. Suddenly the harsh voice broke out: 'Pappenheimers on the Solgau border, Pappenheimers ten miles from Lichtenstein; how do Pappenheim's men come here?'

'On the very day that the Prince of Solgau comes to Lichtenstein!' Lormont drawled. The Capuchin looked at him long and steadily.

'You think something, Lormont?'

'I fear I do, sir,' said Lormont, and he sighed. It seemed that he would have to explain. 'God in His providence seems to me to have sent them to frighten Prince Eberhard into alliance with Lichtenstein.' He paused. 'God,' he added thoughtfully, 'is great.' The Capuchin frowned. 'So he put them into Pappenheim's coats,' said Lormont, and yawned.

'And yet — if it brings us alliance with Solgau,' said the Capuchin slowly. His dull eyes flashed. 'Perhaps — perhaps I dare try a fall with Prince Ludwig von Lichtenstein.'

'Doubtless, sir; you might drive a hard bargain with the devil in hell,' drawled Lormont. He brushed his eyebrow with one finger. 'And we are at Lichtenstein,' said he.

For some minutes the Capuchin sat silent; then he rose, unlocked a box of despatches and handed some to Lormont.

'Read,' he said; he laid parchment on the table and took a pen in his hand; but for a long while he wrote nothing.

The dance began merrily; and when the music stopped for a moment Prince Ludwig led Dorothea away. She was flushed and breathless from the dance. He held up a curtain.

'Dare you face the terrace?' said he. She smiled an answer. It was a warm night in early June; on the dark terrace they heard the music only faintly through the ripple of the deep water below. In the gloomy depths of the river the stars were mirrored fitfully as the water rolled by in tiny waves.

'Your Highness has given me the happiest day of my life,' said Ludwig softly.

'Indeed, I liked the dance too,' Dorothea answered very quickly. Her heart was beating very fast, and she dared not think of what he would answer.

'The dance? Yes,' he muttered. 'It was much to feel your hand in mine, but more, far more, to know that I saved you this afternoon. Ah, Dorothea, can you guess how I loved to do that?'

'It — it was very brave,' said Dorothea, with a catch in her breath. She wavered a little in her walk and his arm stole round her. 'Indeed, I thank you, Prince Ludwig,' she said like a child. Ludwig drew her closer to him and took her trembling hand in his long thin fingers.

'Princess, my princess, it is not your thanks I want,' he said softly. Her head rested on his shoulder, and she felt his breath on her cheek. 'I want your love,' he whispered. She lay quivering in his arms, and could not speak. 'Your love,

Dorothea, your love,' he said again with passion ringing in his voice. His grasp grew stronger.

'Yes,' she murmured, 'yes,' and felt her face hot as fire.

Her breast throbbed under his hand, and as he pressed his hot lips to hers, for one moment Ludwig von Lichtenstein forgot even himself.

CHAPTER III

THE PAWNS OF STATECRAFT

PRINCE Eberhard sat between Ludwig and Père Joseph thinking that he had never known two men so clever and so considerate. He had found already what dangers beset a State that had no friends; yet here they were pressing his own salvation upon him as if it were a kindness to them. They could forget how proudly he — pho! it was not he, but Karl — how proudly that obstinate boy, Karl of Erbach, had flung their advances back. They vied with one another in favours; the Capuchin even gave Ludwig a sharp rebuke for expecting too much of Solgau. Here was a chance for a wise man to take, now he had freed himself for a moment from that foolish boy.

'Well, Henri, I trust it was a good game,' said Lormont, coming into Père Joseph's room. Turenne looked up:

'I held no cards,' said he with a laugh.

'Cards? Oh, passable legs, good shoulders, and a hang-dog face. Surely they served for a Lichtenstein ball? Ah!' he yawned — 'and I, your un-

happy double, am sleepy yet!' He flung himself carelessly on a couch and yawned again. 'My dear friend, I have spoken ten words to your one,' said he. Turenne looked up:

'Is she to marry him?' he asked fiercely.

'The question lacks clearness,' Lormont drawled.

'Ludwig and the Princess!'

'Our very dear friend Ludwig — and that girl with the Virgin's face? I trust some god may remember to forbid!' said Lormont, and he sat up.

'You have heard nothing?'

'No word: do the gods allow the devil to marry an angel? That is — not wise.'

'It is not a jest, Lormont!' said Turenne sharply.

'I believe not. I think that is why I am annoyed.'

The two men sat silent for some time.

'You had not seen her before, Henri?' asked Lormont. Turenne shook his head. 'Only yesterday,' murmured Lormont, and patted his ruffles.

The door opened and Père Joseph came in. Both men rose in silence watching him keenly. They heard the two soldiers ground arms in the corridor. The Capuchin looked from one to the other.

'Is there news?' said he.

'That is for you to tell us, sir,' said Turenne. Père Joseph sat down heavily.

'Yes; I have news,' he answered. 'Lichtenstein

and Solgau are allies of France and — each of the other.' He looked at Turenne.

'The terms?' said Turenne hoarsely. 'The terms?'

'A hundred thousand livres a year from France.' Turenne gripped the table.

'Between Solgau and Lichtenstein?' he asked.

'The Prince von Lichtenstein marries the Princess Dorothea,' said the Capuchin slowly.

'That is part of the treaty?'

'I wrote it.'

Turenne's face was white with pain and rage.

'Work for an envoy of France!' he cried. 'You would marry that child to the blackest scoundrel in Germany, suckled on vice and ——'

'The Vicomte de Turenne forgets that he is under my orders,' said Père Joseph quietly.

'The Vicomte de Turenne remembers that he is a gentleman,' cried Turenne. 'Faugh! Your Church makes flesh and blood, and you may traffic in it if you will. But I am not of your faith, and I will have no part in it.' He tore off his sword and flung it clashing on the table. 'That came from you. Keep it for causes like yours!' He stood with clenched hands biting his lip.

Père Joseph tapped his fingers quietly on the table.

'What say you, Lormont?' he asked.

'I always agree with Turenne, sir. It is less trouble,' drawled Lormont, and bowed.

'Have I leave to go?' said Turenne coldly.

'Wait!' said the Capuchin. He paced up and down the room slowly twice. 'I see why I cannot blame you, Henri,' he said. 'I am sorry that you are wrong.' He came to the table and spoke in a low voice, leaning towards Turenne. 'For if the work had been mine I think I might have undone it. But that marriage was made by the Princess Dorothea's consent last night. I had not thought of it.'

Turenne clutched at the table to steady himself, and he turned to Lormont.

'So here is the end of yesterday's comedy!' he said with a cold smile.

Père Joseph opened the door and beckoned to them. The two men followed him like children. They passed along to a window in the other side of the castle. The Capuchin stopped and looked out; then he took Turenne's arm, drew him to the window and pointed. Thirty feet below on the terrace sat Dorothea and Ludwig. His hand was half hidden in her golden hair and she looked up smiling into his face. He bent his head and kissed her again and again. Turenne stepped quietly back.

'I made a mistake, my father,' he said, and his voice was steady and cold.

'Give me your arm, Henri,' said the Capuchin, and Lormont fell behind as they walked back together. Lormont sighed.

'So angels are fools!' said he. 'I wonder—is God?'

A little while afterwards as Père Joseph and Lormont sat alone, Lormont looked up from a half-written despatch.

'Do you think, sir, the Princess Dorothea is the only piece in Prince Ludwig's game?' he asked quietly.

'There are pieces that will not be played, Lormont,' said the Capuchin. He drummed with his hand on the table. 'It is lucky for the Prince von Lichtenstein there is no man in Solgau.'

'Our faithful ally plays high,' said Lormont thoughtfully.

'If he dices with God? Ay, but the dice are loaded,' Père Joseph answered.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAN IN SOLGAU

THE Baron von Rosenberg swung himself heavily down from his horse in the courtyard of Solgau Castle. For a moment he looked away to where the grey walls and red roofs of Rosenberg lay among the western woods, then he turned on his heel and walked slowly up the stone staircase with clashing of spurs and sword. He found the Count of Erbach alone.

'Well, Karl, and how goes it in Solgau?' he asked, as he sat on a creaking chair.

'You have come from Lichtenstein?' said Karl sharply.

'Yes, I've come from Lichtenstein,' the Baron answered gruffly, and he did not look at Karl.

'And how is the good Prince Ludwig?'

'The — good Prince Ludwig,' said the Baron stammering, 'is — is more like a cat than ever,' he growled; and Karl saw that his tidings were bad.

'Well, how did you fare?' Karl said slowly, watching his voice.

'Prince Ludwig, he gave us a dinner and he gave our healths, and he gave us a dance and — I have a message for you, Karl,' said the Baron, looking at the table.

'From Prince Eberhard?' said Karl, though he guessed the answer.

'Ay,' said the Baron von Rosenberg. He walked to the window, and spoke with his back to Karl. 'You are to take command of the army and join the Duke of Weimar.' There was no answer for a minute, and the Baron von Rosenberg felt the silence.

'Is that all?' said Karl quietly. He saw that his father's work and his own were to be all undone: Solgau to be a plaything for Croat and Walloon: the war-blight to spread over all the land — so his brow was bent and his face set as he said very quietly: 'Is that all?'

And the Baron von Rosenberg, still looking out, said:

'Dorothea marries Ludwig.'

Karl said nothing.

The Baron von Rosenberg glancing round at last saw the outline of his heavy square chin and jaw and his brown strong hand lying tight clenched on the table and nodded to himself. The door opened and Yolande ran in with a happy light in her eyes:

'Is it true, father?' she cried.

The Baron von Rosenberg turned and smiled against his will:

'Ay, we go to war, lass,' said he.

Karl looked at her as she stood with her deep grey eyes sparkling, and her full curving lips parted, breath coming a little quickly, and her white hands clasped on her breast; and his frown grew darker.

'Now, now——' she cried joyfully, and she looked at Karl and stopped and blushed. Karl rose and thrust his chair back.

'Now the Lady Yolande will have a chance to see murdered peasants all over Solgau!' The sneer came sharply.

Yolande grew pale and her eyes flashed:

'Not while the Count of Erbach is so brave!'

The Baron struck in:

'The Prince von Lichtenstein marries Dorothea, Yolande,' said he. 'We are allies of France and of Lichtenstein,' he went on, talking to keep them both silent; 'the monk, Père Joseph, was at Lichtenstein. The treaties are signed——' and his stock of words failed.

'I think she is fortunate,' said Yolande slowly.

'My God!' Karl groaned; he groped blindly for the door and went out. He was afraid of himself. He had lost his work and his love.

When he was gone the Baron von Rosenberg came and stood beside Yolande and laid his big hand on her shoulder:

'You make a mistake, lass,' he said, and he shook his head.

She blushed darkly, and leant against her father:

'No dear; I know — I know,' she murmured; 'and I — I would only make him be great,' she said with faltering lips. 'He could'; and as she looked up into her father's face her eyes were heavy with tears.

'He is right, lass, and you are wrong,' said her father sternly. Her eyes opened wide with surprise. 'You are wrong,' he said again with a frown. Then his face grew kinder: 'And you — will be glad when you learn that,' he said and patted her hair.

'No,' she whispered.

That night couriers sped all over the land of Solgau to muster the army of Prince Eberhard, and in the castle a light burnt very late in the room where Karl of Erbach sat beginning to pull down what he and his father had built — the welfare of Solgau.

When Prince Eberhard came back from his visit to Lichtenstein he brought with him Père Joseph, that the Frenchman might learn the strength of his new ally. In the courtyard of the castle Karl

of Erbach, Marshal of Solgau, stood with bare head to welcome his Prince. And to Père Joseph he bowed very low. Together Prince Eberhard and the French envoy passed up the great staircase.

'And I am to command the garrison of Weissberg, Karl,' whispered Max.

'It is a great post,' said the Count of Erbach.

'And Dorothea? You have heard of Dorothea?'

'I pray for her Highness's happiness,' said Karl, slowly, and they passed into the castle.

'Your Excellency must allow me to present to you the Count of Erbach, Marshal of Solgau,' quoth Prince Eberhard with his hand on Karl's sleeve. Karl and the Capuchin bowed, and each waited for the other to speak.

'I am honoured in greeting the Count of Erbach,' said Père Joseph.

'I regret that I have not had this honour sooner,' Karl answered.

The Capuchin looked at him keenly and Karl gave the look back.

'I believe, your Highness, we should all have been glad of the assistance of the Count of Erbach in our negotiations,' said Père Joseph, turning to Prince Eberhard.

'Certainly, most certainly!' said Prince Eberhard solemnly. 'Karl would beyond doubt have

been of the very greatest — very greatest — greatest ——' And then Père Joseph bowed and looked at Karl.

'My aid would have been most willing,' Karl answered gravely, 'but your Excellency is aware that some things are better done by a few at their ease.'

Beyond the Capuchin Lormont stopped in the middle of a yawn, touched his moustache delicately, and eyed the Count of Erbach.

'The Count of Erbach's foresight is profound,' said Père Joseph.

Karl bowed.

'I do not doubt we have found as true an ally in France as in Lichtenstein,' said he.

Prince Eberhard began a long speech of compliment to France, and the Capuchin smiled and bowed and seemed to listen. But from under his eyebrows he watched the Count of Erbach very closely.

Lormont leant against a pillar:

'I incline to think,' he said, and he yawned, 'I incline to think, Turenne, that our holy father has met his match.'

Turenne smiled.

'Give the loser his fun, Lormont,' said he.

'The ——? oh, perhaps. But indeed, Henri, I think he should be a friend of yours.' Turenne looked sharply at the lazy handsome face.

'It is well you are often right, Lormont. For you talk like a fool.'

'I love to be in the fashion, Henri. I confess it is tiresome.'

'Why should that German be a friend of mine?' said Turenne sharply.

'Your voice is very harsh at times, Henri,' sighed Lormont. 'But — ah, yes — when I remember what I meant I will tell you. Oh yes — I think the most noble Count of Erbach hates our dear friend Ludwig nearly as much as you.'

Turenne's cold grey eyes flashed.

'Why?' he said.

'Pray do not look so strenuous, Henri. Did you — ah! — observe how he spoke the name "Lichtenstein"?'

Turenne looked with interest at the Count of Erbach, and Lormont followed his eyes lazily:

'But at least there is a man in Solgau,' said he.

CHAPTER V

THE GAMESTERS

ALL through the land of Solgau the drums and the trumpets of Prince Eberhard called men to his army. His banners were flying in the townships luring men on to follow those who were marching with the Count of Erbach to join the Duke Bernhard of Weimar. From the walls of the castle of Solgau the Lady Yolande had seen the great array march out, seen the flashing arms tossed high to salute Prince Eberhard, seen the stern sad face of Karl of Erbach in front of all. Now that what she longed for had come she was not very happy. For she began to think that Karl had grown gloomy and sullen because he was afraid to risk his fame in war. There were few men she had known who cared for such things as were most in Karl's mind; and indeed she could not have found one other man in Solgau who loved the little State and understood it, who had worked for it and given all his strength to it as this man whom she was beginning to despise. So the wily old monk to whom Solgau was just a

pawn in the game, who had seen the Count of Erbach but once or twice, as he, too, looked down from the battlements, knew far better than the Lady Yolande why the face of the man who loved her was sad. The girl sat there searching her heart and angry with herself as she put the question why her thoughts and her eyes still strayed to this man who had shown himself unworthy. Her cheeks grew hot because she could not keep a coward from her mind. For a coward he was; of that she was sure enough. He was not, perhaps, afraid for himself; she would do him that justice, grant him the courage common to every peasant he led; but afraid he was for his fame. Afraid that the Count of Erbach might lose, if he came to be tested, those honours he had won so cheaply in peace. It might be that he was right; so much had her judgment altered that she could believe now that the man's greatness was but a sham after all.

While these were the thoughts of the woman who at worst had loved him once, there was one not very far away from her, the old Capuchin, who found it in his heart to be sorry for the man whose work he had undone, whose life perhaps he had spoilt. He knew what Yolande had yet to learn, that the work of a man might be more to him than honours or life, sometimes even more than honour.

And because he was a man with work well done behind him, and a man who honoured men of his own kind, he smoothed his gown over his knees and put Karl of Erbach in a special place in his memory.

But Karl of Erbach who should have been thinking, surely, of himself or of Solgau, was thinking just then of Yolande's dark grey eyes. And then, as he turned his horse and rode away he made the Capuchin's judgment right: he looked out over the fair countryside, he wondered if ever he would see it again as he left it, as he had made it; and he thought, and his face grew sterner still, of his own six years of work and the work of his father before him.

So the Count of Erbach marched away to join Bernhard of Weimar, and Prince Maximilian went to take command of Weissberg, the great fortress beyond the eastern border of Lichtenstein that Prince Ludwig held for France. Solgau had taken a hand in the game at last.

Ludwig von Lichtenstein who had played before, made ready quietly to use his cards. Two nights before his marriage with the Princess Dorothea the Prince von Lichtenstein went hunting on his eastern border, and on the morning of the next day, riding alone, he met a little party whose leader hailed him:

'Ha, well met, your Highness,' he cried reining up his horse. 'This is indeed a favour, but' — he lowered his voice as Ludwig came up — 'the time is short for compliments. I found a hovel hard by, and my knaves dealt with its owner. It will serve.'

They came to a tiny cottage, and the newcomer posted his men about it. As he dismounted he nodded towards a body lying in the ditch.

'The fool showed fight,' said he, and he laughed. They went in.

'And now — will your Most Noble Highness be good enough to inform your servant what all this means?'

Ludwig smiled. 'The Marquis Galeazzo does not understand?' he asked.

'I understand only one thing,' said Galeazzo thoughtfully; 'you are playing false to one side. And I want to know only one thing — which is it?'

'You are strangely blunt, Galeazzo,' Ludwig answered.

'I use fine phrases to fools.'

'I am indeed honoured,' murmured Ludwig gently.

'And I keep bluntness for knaves,' Galeazzo went on. 'And I ask you again — what does this mean?

If you can tell me — well.' He paused and looked sharply at Ludwig. 'And if not — perhaps better,' he said slowly. Ludwig started.

'If you threaten ——' he began. Galeazzo waved his hand.

'I never threaten,' said he. 'If you will have peace with the Emperor, so be it. If you will have war, we can perhaps bear it. But, indeed, Prince Ludwig, you are too clever a friend. The ally of the Emperor cannot be the ally of France.'

'Not even if it hurts France?' said Ludwig quietly.

'Ah!' said Galeazzo. 'I have heard of a man who trusted your Highness. I think you murdered him.'

'If my oath does not satisfy the Emperor ——'

'Your oath has work to do in France.'

Ludwig said nothing. Galeazzo rose.

'My time is short,' he said; 'is it friend or foe, Prince Ludwig?' and still Ludwig was silent. 'So; well, my felicitations on your marriage with the Princess from Solgau. Solgau and Lichtenstein under one crown,' he said thoughtfully. 'What said Père Joseph to that, Prince Ludwig? Will France allow that?' Ludwig changed colour.

'Prince Maximilian is alive to succeed to Solgau,' he said.

'Ah, at present!' said Galeazzo carelessly, and he turned to go.

'Wait!' said Ludwig sharply. 'I would do much to assure the Emperor of my friendship.' Galeazzo flicked his gloves.

'To wit?' he asked.

'If Weissberg fell into the hands of the Emperor, would the Emperor approve the union of Solgau and Lichtenstein?'

Galeazzo sat down and rested his head on his hand.

'That might be made part of a treaty,' he admitted. Then suddenly he looked up. 'Ah! Prince Maximilian commands at Weissberg!' he said, and the two men looked into each other's eyes. 'So be it!' said Galeazzo. 'My despatches shall reach you.' He rose and drew on his gloves. 'I think you are wise in this, Prince; but a man may be too much a knave, as well as too little.'

And as the Marquis Galeazzo rode back to Vienna he thought that some day it would be his duty to crush the Prince von Lichtenstein; he smiled.

A day afterwards Prince Ludwig married the Princess Dorothea.

CHAPTER VI

THE HONOUR OF FRANCE

FATE dealt very kindly with Prince Ludwig von Lichtenstein. The first subsidy from France was paid duly and without question. The Princess Dorothea was in his hands, and for a few weeks that was enough to make him content. So far his plans had served him well; and he thought with an easy, ugly smile of the men he had beaten — the fool who was prince in Solgau, the Capuchin who had paid him, the sullen Count of Erbach, who feared to show his hate. For more than a few weeks the Princess Dorothea was very happy; and if Ludwig's moods were sometimes hard to understand, she knew that she was not wise enough to be told of all the great affairs of state that busied the mind of the man on whom she lavished her beauty and her love. A new loveliness came over her face, the childish delight in life and her own happiness that had shone once in her blue eyes passed away, and in its place was set the light of a deeper happiness and a deeper joy — the joy of loving so noble

a man as Prince Ludwig. But he did not see the change. So the months went by at Lichtenstein, till at last on one dark December morning, riding a lame horse, weary and travel-stained and alone, there came to the castle one who hung his head in shame as the guards stood aside to let him pass. He brushed the man aside who would have stayed him, and flung open the door of Prince Ludwig's cabinet. Ludwig looked up angrily; then as he saw who it was his eyes grew large and his lips curled back from his teeth.

'I've lost it, Ludwig, I've lost it,' groaned Prince Maximilian of Solgau, and he fell into a chair and hid his face from Ludwig's eyes. Ludwig did not ask what he meant.

'You escaped?' he muttered half to himself.

'Yes, curse it, I escaped. Someone opened the eastern gate — early on yesterday — God's curse on them!' Ludwig started forward.

'Who was it? You do not know?' Prince Max, cowering in the chair, shrank from the glaring eyes and shook his head. Ludwig leant back again.

'How did you escape?' he said harshly.

'The men were all out of hand — I got a few together — charged down the market-place — they held us there — we broke through to the gate —

Galeazzo charged us under the walls — he, he cried to them to spare me ——'

'Galeazzo? Curse him!' cried Prince Ludwig wildly.

'Ay, curse him,' Max said bitterly. He rose wearily from his chair. 'I have shamed Solgau,' he said with his eyes on the ground. 'I am in your hands, Prince Ludwig. I do not want mercy. I shall never go back to Solgau.'

Ludwig eyed him coldly for a moment with a sneer on his lip and a heavy frown marking his high narrow brow. Then, as he strove to patch up his plans again, the door slammed loudly behind him and —

'What does this mean, Prince Ludwig?' cried a harsh voice. Ludwig looked round. Staring down at him angrily stood a man with dark lean face and yellow blood-shot eyes. Ludwig did not answer. Paul, Baron de Creil, the French resident at Lichtenstein, dashed his fist down on the table. 'What does this mean?' he thundered. 'Is it true, Weissberg lost?'

'It is true,' said Max hoarsely. The Baron de Creil turned on his heel.

'And you have come back to tell us,' he said with a sneer. No one answered. The Frenchman looked from one to the other, drew a chair to the table and

sat in it. 'So,' he said quietly; 'and now your Highness will be good enough to explain how Weissberg was lost to France.'

'Tell him,' Max groaned. Ludwig moved in his chair, smoothed his moustache, looked from under his eyelids at the Baron de Creil.

'Believe me, my dear Baron, no one regrets what has happened more than I,' he said. 'By some traitors whom Prince Maximilian does not know the east gate of Weissberg was opened to the Marquis Galeazzo. What more is there to tell? He spread out his hands. 'The town is taken — Prince Maximilian escapes.'

'A pretty tale,' cried the Frenchman. 'A garrison of five thousand men fall without a siege — through traitors, says his brave Highness,' and he pointed at Max. 'And who were the traitors? His Highness cannot guess! So his Highness has lost five thousand men, and he alone has escaped to tell us. But indeed you are very fortunate, Prince Maximilian.'

'I think, my dear Baron, you make too much of it,' said Ludwig. 'Such things will happen in war — have always happened, and no man can tell why.' The Frenchman turned on him.

'No one can tell why? But indeed, Prince Ludwig, you do me injustice,' he cried. 'I have known

such things happen, and — I have hanged the man by whose grace they came to happen. I can tell why, Prince Ludwig; it is because some man is a traitor to France, and for traitors I am set here to watch —' he stopped for breath. 'So it seems I have found them,' he added.

Prince Max rose wearily.

'The blame is all mine,' he said. 'You say well enough, I have betrayed my trust. The Prince von Lichtenstein is innocent as you. Do what you will.'

And then Ludwig gave him one sharp glance and looked covertly again at the Baron de Creil.

'Bah! brave words,' cried the Frenchman. 'So your Highness will play the man of honour now the deed is done. Is there aught we can do will give us back Weissberg?'

'Prince Maximilian has spoken, Baron,' said Ludwig quietly, 'and you have ——'

'Spoken, yes; oh, you can both speak well enough. I did not doubt that. And you can do, too; that I have seen. Bah! what is all this to the purpose? Will fine words give us justice on traitors?'

'Try me, try me,' groaned Max, 'and in God's name have done.'

Ludwig started; the frown passed away from his

face, and he looked sharply and openly now at the Baron de Creil.

'Try you?' muttered the Frenchman with a puzzled look. 'Ay, ay, that's just. So be it, then.'

Ludwig sprang up.

'So it shall not be,' he cried. 'Who are you to judge a prince of the house of Solgau? At least, I will have no part in it,' he added more quietly. There was a pause, and then the Frenchman laughed.

'Ah, I see, a very pretty play,' he said, with a sneer. 'He was to offer and you were to refuse. But, by the saints of God! Prince Ludwig von Lichtenstein, he has offered, and tried and judged he shall be.'

'I am ready,' said Max quietly, but the Frenchman did not heed him. He opened the door.

'Call the captain of my escort,' he cried. He flung the door to and sat down again. 'Ay, tried he shall be, Prince Ludwig, and you shall be one of his judges.'

And then Prince Ludwig changed colour and his under lip quivered:

'I — I cannot judge him,' he stammered.

'But with you as judge he will have all justice — perhaps something more,' said the Baron de Creil. 'Are not you his defender, Prince Ludwig?' and he laughed at Ludwig's white face. The Baron

de Creil believed that he hated all fools, and so he hated Prince Ludwig. But Ludwig, who hated few but those who stood in his way, felt grateful to the Baron de Creil; and the colour came back to his cheeks as he made up his mind to the rest of the game. He looked from the Baron de Creil to the boy who sat listlessly in a corner of the room, and there was a smile on his lip for both of them. Prince Ludwig always despised his tools, as he had begun to despise Dorothea. But he had forgotten her now.

The captain of the escort came in, a grizzled old soldier of many campaigns.

'Court-martial,' said the Baron de Creil shortly, with a wave of his hand towards Max.

'So'; and the captain sat down.

'Prince Ludwig, may we make you president?' the Baron asked. Ludwig shook his head.

'This court is none of my making,' said he. 'I am here, Monsieur le Baron, only to defend the Prince Maximilian.'

The Baron de Creil smiled. He would judge this case, he thought to himself, in his own way; and he would show the fool who called himself Prince von Lichtenstein that Paul de Creil was no man to trifle with.

'Prince Maximilian of Solgau,' he said sharply,

'this court it here to try you for ill-doing in the loss of Weissberg and its garrison to the enemies of France, Lichtenstein, and Solgau. You commanded at Lichtenstein?' Max nodded. 'With a garrison of five thousand and a store of provisions and munitions of war?'

'Yes, yes,' said Max wearily.

'Yet on the morning of yesterday the enemy entered by the east gate and captured the town and the garrison — and you only have escaped to tell us?'

'Yes,' said Max, leaning his head on his hand.

'How did they enter?'

'The gate was opened.'

'By whom?' Max shook his head.

'God knows!' said he.

'Who commanded the guard at the gate?' A pause followed.

'I do not remember,' said Max at last.

'When did they enter?'

'I do not know; they were in the market-place when I was roused.' The captain laughed gruffly:

'Ho, ho, this commander!' said he; and Max flushed.

'How did you escape?'

'I had broken out with a few men; Galeazzo charged us; the others were cut off; Galeazzo told

his men to spare me; I do not know why,' said Max simply. 'There is no more to tell.'

'Ho, ho! a fine story,' laughed the captain. 'Why did Galeazzo spare you, mon prince?'

'God knows!' said Max again, looking up at them listlessly. But the captain laughed.

'God knows much, does He not, monsieur?' he said, turning to Ludwig. Ludwig moved in his chair.

'You have no more to say than this?' cried the Baron de Creil; his prisoner seemed to him a fool as well as a traitor.

The boy shook his head:

'I lost the town,' said he. For a moment there was silence.

'Your sentence, captain?' said the Baron de Creil.

'Sentence?' said the captain, 'Pho, there is but one'; and he growled out the old lanzknecht form: 'You shall take him to a green tree and tie him up by the neck so that the wind may blow under and over him and the sun shine on him for three days; then shall he be cut down and buried after the custom of war.'

But at last Ludwig sprang up:

'By all the devils in hell that shall not be!' he cried. 'Would you hang a prince?'

'No servant of his most Christian Majesty would

hang a prince, whether of Solgau or Lichtenstein,' said the Baron de Creil sharply; but he spoke for himself and not others. 'My sentence is that the prisoner, Maximilian of Solgau, being found guilty of treason in his command at Weissberg, committed to him by France, Lichtenstein, and Solgau, be beheaded. And this I pronounce for the glory of God and the honour of France.'

'Ay, ay, it will serve,' growled the captain.

'What say you, Prince Ludwig? Content? Or shall we wait for the sentence of the envoy of his Majesty, Père Joseph de Tremblay?' Ludwig bit his lip; the choice was a hard one. He would rather have no voice in the death and yet——. While he doubted:

'I accept it,' said Max wearily. 'Do not care for me Ludwig,' and Ludwig could not look at him. 'Let it be soon, Ludwig; do not let Dorothea see. Tell her I — I accepted the sentence,' said the boy. Ludwig dashed back his chair and went out.

'Woman!' growled the captain to the Baron de Creil, with a nod of his head at the door. The Baron shrugged his shoulders and whispered behind his hand.

'What, he too?' said the captain and started up.

'Perhaps,' said the Baron de Creil. He suspected Ludwig of plotting with the prisoner.

CHAPTER VII

FROM THE BOWER WINDOW

THE Princess Dorothea sat in the window of her bower with a song-book open on her knees. She turned the pages idly, stopped at a ballad which Ludwig had praised, and smiled at the words; then with her eyes still smiling she looked out across the castle courtyard. A little troop of men marched out from the lower guard-room, and she saw them and sighed softly; they were part of the escort of the Baron de Creil, and the Baron had troubled Ludwig's thoughts much, she knew, and made Ludwig peevish and gloomy, even a little unkind. So she thought, and then chid herself for thinking that Ludwig had ever been, could ever be, aught but kind.

Outside her door rose suddenly the noise of whispering and shuffling of feet, and then there came in two of the women she had brought with her from Solgau, and each looked at the other and neither would speak, till one ran to the window.

'Ah, your Highness has seen?' she cried, wringing her hands. 'They are murdering your brother!' Dorothea started up.

'Are you mad, Adelheid?' she said quickly. 'Prince Maximilian is at Weissberg.'

'No, no, your Highness. Weissberg is fallen. Prince Max came here this morning. The Prince tried him — and the block — the block,' she pointed wildly to the courtyard, 'that is for him!' Dorothea's face was white as snow, and her eyes grew big with terror; she caught at her heart, trembling.

'Ah, it is not true! Tell me it is not true,' she cried. 'Ludwig would not — would not —' and Prince Ludwig stood in the doorway. She saw him, and with a low happy cry she ran to him and fell on his breast clinging to him.

'Ludwig, you would not suffer it!' she murmured, and she looked up with tear-laden eyes to his face. But Ludwig's eyes were on the women.

'Out, fools, out!' he said sharply, and they hurried away. Ludwig unclasped his wife's arms, put her in a chair, and sat down beside her.

'You mistake, Dorothea,' he said smoothly. 'This is no work of mine. All the morning I have been striving hard to save your brother. It is not I who condemn him, it is France ——'

'But you will save him, Ludwig?' she cried

anxiously, snatching at his hand. He put his thin fingers over hers and patted them gently.

'If it were for me to do, I would do it,' he answered. 'I cannot stand against France. And, Dorothea, he bade me tell you — he himself — "I accept the sentence," he said; he admits it is just.'

'Ah, Ludwig, you do not mean it! You will not let him be killed?' she cried.

'It is no doing of mine,' said Prince Ludwig coldly still. 'I have tried to stop it. I can do no more.'

She fell on her knees before him and caught both his hands in hers, and with her eyes running over with tears and the wet drops glistening on her cheeks and sobs shaking her round white throat, she cried:

'Ah, Ludwig, you say it to tease me! Say you say it to tease me! It is not true, you cannot do it! Ludwig, he is my brother, my brother!'

'He admits it is just: there is no more to say,' said Ludwig, angrily trying to free his hands. But she drew them to her lips and kissed them, and pressing closer to him:

'Ludwig, Ludwig, my love, my dear love, save him for me. Ludwig, you will?' she whispered.

He tore his hands from her, and stood up.

'Enough child's play,' he said angrily. 'The man accepted the sentence. I did not pass it, and I cannot recall it. If he had lived he would have lost his honour,' said the Prince von Lichtenstein very sternly. She looked at him wild-eyed, all amazed. All that was true in her world had turned false: Ludwig did not love her.

'Max, my brother, my brother!' she murmured; but Prince Ludwig did not understand.

'It is better so,' he said coldly; 'and you will be the heiress of Solgau.'

'Heiress of Solgau!' she cried starting up, and with the tears wet on her cheeks she laughed long and shrill, 'Heiress of Solgau!'

Below in the courtyard an order rang out sharply: she rushed to the window, looked out and ran to the door. Ludwig caught her.

'Sit down, girl, sit down,' he said coldly. She struggled to pass him. He flung her off; she staggered and fell, and he went out and locked the door. Outside he stopped to listen; he heard her rise; run to the door and beat at it wildly; run back to the window and look out; then to the door again, dashing herself against it. Again she was back at the window; she saw her brother come out, with hanging head and faltering steps, and at last her womanhood came to her aid and she screamed

and fell fainting on the floor. Max on the way to death heard the scream and looked up; but the sight was spared him. Outside Prince Ludwig sighed placidly as he heard her fall and walked away. On the stairs he met one of her women, and he remembered to tell her that her mistress had fainted.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ORDERS OF THE BARON DE CREIL

THE block was set in the middle of the courtyard, a guard of Frenchmen posted around it, when, with a loud blare of trumpets, there rode over the drawbridge the Baron Hildebrand von Schwartzsee, seneschal of Lichtenstein, with a gay troop of riders clattering behind him. The Baron von Schwartzsee rose in his stirrups with an oath as he saw what things were being done in his castle without the good will of its seneschal, and he spurred up to the lieutenant of the guard. The lieutenant was bidding his men stand away from the prisoner as Prince Max prayed for the last time with a fat Lutheran pastor beside him.

'Four paces rear,' cried the lieutenant, hoarsely.

'Halt!' thundered Baron Hildebrand. 'Ten thousand fiends! Lieutenant, what is this?' His shout broke across the Lutheran's prayers, and the pastor stopped and held up his hand for silence.

'Orders of the Baron de Creil, Baron,' said the lieutenant.

'Orders of the fiend, lieutenant. Is the Baron de Creil prince in Lichtenstein?'

'The Prince consents,' said the lieutenant shortly.

'The Prince — eh?' gasped Baron Hildebrand. He pushed his hat back and rubbed his forehead. 'What devil's game is this?' he muttered to himself; and he turned and looked at his followers, but their faces were as blank as his own.

'—— deal with this man not after the justice of men, but in Thine infinite mercy grant that he may come at last to Thy glory ——' said the Lutheran in his prayers.

Then the Baron Hildebrand saw Prince Ludwig and spurred across the courtyard.

'Is this by your consent, your Highness?' he said roughly, and waved his hand to the middle of the courtyard.

'By my consent and the prisoner's,' said Prince Ludwig, using the boy's shame to shield himself.

'For what is it done?'

'Prince Maximilian betrayed Weissberg to the Emperor,' said Prince Ludwig in a cold steady voice, and met Baron Hildebrand's eyes. The Baron rubbed his forehead again and stared at Ludwig.

'—— and because the path of man is beset with the snares of the devil lay not this man's follies

to his charge——' said the Lutheran. And the Baron Hildebrand still staring at his master said hoarsely:

'That is not true.' Ludwig's eyes flashed.

'I say it, Baron,' he repeated.

'——O Thou who knowest all and rulest all things in the right way, for that the ways of men are hard, and this Thy servant's burden over-heavy, grant that his sorrow and shame may turn to joy——' said the Lutheran.

Baron Hildebrand's right hand was feeling inside his cloak.

'You will not stop this?' he asked fiercely. 'You will not stop this, Prince Ludwig?'

'He was judged by the Baron de Creil. It is to satisfy France. He accepted it,' said Ludwig, less like a prince than a criminal.

'You lie,' said the Baron; he tore from his breast the great golden seneschal's key and flung it down before Prince Ludwig's feet. 'I do not serve liars.' He swung his horse round sharply. But there was silence in the middle of the courtyard. Prince Maximilian of Solgau had gone to meet a juster judge than the Baron de Creil; and the Lutheran, still on his knees, was praying in words that were not heard by men a prayer older than his faith.

'"Let not the ungodly have his desire, O Lord:

let not his mischievous imagination prosper, lest they be too proud." '

The Baron Hildebrand von Schwartzsee galloped out over the drawbridge to join Karl of Erbach. But none of his company followed him.

So in the courtyard of the castle of Lichtenstein Prince Maximilian of Solgau was done to death, and the Frenchmen who served a priest of the Church went off to drink and gamble. And Ludwig von Lichtenstein, eating his dinner alone, smiled at the fools he had outwitted again.

Late that night there came to the drawbridge, spurring hard because they had heard of the fall of Weissberg, some half-score riders. They bade the warder summon the captain of the French guard. Growling out sleepy oaths the warder bade them go back whence they came. At last, grumbling and swearing still, he let down the footbridge and bade two of them come in, since come they must, and let the rest cool their heels and the horses till the morning. The two who came with faces muffled in their cloaks crossed the courtyard quickly to the lower guardroom, opened the door, and were greeted with a storm of curses.

'Mother of God! shut the door, spawn of Beelzebub, is this a night——' the man who opened the door dropped his cloak from his face and en-

tered. Then the room was very silent. He pointed to the door, and the troopers stumbled over one another to get away. Two men lay drunk.

'Take these swine away, corporal,' he said sharply.

'Yes, Monsieur le Vicomte; assuredly Monsieur le Vicomte — it is done, Monsieur le Vicomte,' stammered the corporal.

'And send your captain to me,' said Turenne.

'Yes, Monsieur le Vicomte; assuredly, Mons——'

'Go!' the man fled, and Turenne came back to the man who stood outside in the shadow. 'Will you enter, sir?' he said. He placed a chair and Père Joseph sat. 'They are all safe here, sir,' he said. The Capuchin nodded; his eye wandered over the room and he rose, walked to the chimney piece and took from it a parchment with a heavy red seal. He read it, leaning forward to catch the candlelight; read it again, shading his eyes with his hand. Then he sat down heavily, held it out at arm's length to Turenne:

'*Miserere mei, Deus,*' he muttered.

Turenne read it too:

'Maximilian of Solgau? The brother of Dorothea?'

'Ay; and the heir of Solgau this morning,' said the Capuchin.

For the parchment said:

'ORDER — that the prisoner Maximilian, called Prince of Solgau, being found guilty by us of treason in his command at Weissberg, committed to him by France, Lichtenstein and Solgau, be beheaded. And this we order for the glory of God and the honour of France.,

'CREIL.

'LÉON DU PLESSIS.'

And in the corner of it in the lieutenant's rough scrawl was written: 'Done. Decr. xxiv. Jean Armand.' Turenne laid it down and drew in his breath.

'Ludwig has not signed,' he said.

'There was no need,' said the Capuchin with a sneer.

Just then the captain came in a little flushed with wine. He stood by the door and saluted. The Capuchin beckoned him to come nearer.

'You will explain — that!' he said, and he held out the parchment with his finger on the name of Léon du Plessis.

'I signed it, your Excellency,' he stammered.

'Yes,' said the Capuchin quietly.

'It was the sentence of the court, your Excellency.'

'Of what court?' asked the Capuchin quietly still.

'Orders of the Baron de Creil, your Excellency. He and I and Prince Ludwig.'

'Prince Ludwig did not sign?' the Capuchin said with a little scorn coming into his voice.

'No, your Excellency. He said he was defending Prince Maximilian. Baron de Creil thought he was in the plot with Prince Maximilian.'

'Ah! And you, captain?'

'It appeared very likely, your Excellency. The place must have been betrayed, your Excellency. Only Prince Maximilian escaped ——'

'Did I ask you these questions, captain?' said the Capuchin coldly. 'Are you experienced in judging princes?'

'No, your Excellency.'

'But you had no hesitation in condemning one?'

'Orders of the Baron de Creil, your Excellency.'

'Did you protest, captain?'

'No, your Excellency.'

'Ah! You will not do this again — sergeant. You may go.'

'But, but your ——'

'You may go, sergeant,' said the Capuchin coldly;

and sergeant Léon du Plessis went out. In the doorway he stumbled against the Baron de Creil and cursed him.

'Ah, your Excellency,' cried the Baron, 'I did not know you were to visit us to-night!' He was meek to those who had power over him.

'So I had supposed,' said Père Joseph. 'Sergeant du Plessis,' he went on, and the baron started: 'Ah, Sergeant du Plessis informs me that various things have been done by the orders of the Baron de Creil; things that I do not quite understand.' He tapped the warrant with his finger.

'That, sir? Why, this morning the fellow ——'

'You mean Prince Maximilian?'

'Yes, sir. He came here with a tale of having lost Weissberg by a surprise. A gate had been opened by traitors — the whole place lost without a blow. He alone had ascaped, and that because Galeazzo bade them spare him.'

'So you found him guilty of what?'

'Treason to France, sir. How should the place be taken and he escape? By the saints, I believe he and Ludwig were in a plot together ——'

'You did not condemn — him?'

'In his own castle, sir? Your Excellency is jesting. But he defended the f—— Prince Maximilian; made excuses for him ——'

'He did not save him?'

'I would not have had it, sir.'

The Capuchin laughed. He looked with a cold sneering glance at the Baron de Creil and said very quietly:

'Fool!'

CHAPTER IX

THE SILENCE OF PÈRE JOSEPH

ALL that night Dorothea lay sleepless, restless, wrung with pain, with a frightened woman watching by her side; and at last she grew quieter and lay still on her face moaning. Her little white arms hung limply over the pillow, and she did not heed the woman who touched them gently and shivered and drew back again as she felt them damp and cold. She pressed her face against the bed, and her body quivered and shuddered; her love, her husband, the man to whom she had given herself up joyfully, had betrayed her, and the pain of it hurt her like shame.

Under the same roof Prince Ludwig slept calmly with placid, tranquil face, and never a dream of what he had done or what he might do yet. And the warm west wind roared round the turrets of Lichtenstein Castle and the rain dashed and beat at the new-spread sand in the middle of the court-yard.

While the storm came down from heaven to the Lichtenstein hills to wash away the blood, the Cap-

uchin on his knees in the little guard-room prayed to God and the Mother of God that it might be his to do justice on Prince Ludwig von Lichtenstein for the works of that day. Forty miles away Karl of Erbach came out from his camp at midnight with a regiment of horse and marched on Lichtenstein. Beside him rode the man who had been Lichtenstein's seneschal that morning, the Baron Hildebrand von Schwartzsee. But on the terrace at Lichtenstein, in the wind and the driving rain, the Vicomte de Turenne paced to and fro, with wild thoughts running in his head — such thoughts as come to a man when fate has been too strong for him and too quick. He planned vengeance on Ludwig von Lichtenstein in this way and that, and each was crueller than the one which had gone before; and then he stopped in his walk and laughed at himself; vengeance on Ludwig, would that aid Dorothea? The pure childish face, the frank blue eyes came up before his sight — how could he help Dorothea? Again he began to scheme and plot in mad crafty folly. And he knew that his plans were madness and folly, but still the crafty brain worked on and on.

In the morning Prince Ludwig was told of the two who had come by night to the castle, and he hurried to the lower guard-room.

'My dear father, what lodging is this for an envoy of France?' he cried as he ran into the room holding out his hands in eager welcome. 'Faith, Lichtenstein is disgraced.'

The Capuchin bowed.

'Your Highness says too much,' he answered coldly.

'Nay, I will not belie my words. Come with me, my dear father.'

The two crossed the courtyard to Prince Ludwig's own room, and the Capuchin saw Turenne and beckoned to him. Ludwig cried to a lackey to bring food, but the Capuchin waved his hand.

'I have eaten,' said he. He sat down before Prince Ludwig and Turenne stood by his chair.

'This is a delight I had not expected, my dear father,' said Ludwig with a smile and a bow.

'Weissberg has fallen,' said the Capuchin slowly with his eyes on Prince Ludwig's face.

'A grave loss,' said Ludwig, and shook his head. 'I learnt from the Baron de Creil how much you would feel it.'

The Capuchin with his heavy grey eyebrows frowning darkly above his eyes said:

'Prince Maximilian of Solgau is — murdered.'

'Murdered?' said Ludwig, quickly. 'He was condemned by the Baron de Creil. Prince Maxi-

milian himself accepted the sentence.' A short, sharp laugh came from Turenne; but Père Joseph sat silent. Ludwig looked quickly at Turenne and turned away from his flashing eyes.

'It is, indeed, true,' he said, uneasily. He hardly knew he was playing his game ill. He could think of little but the stern angry eyes of the two Frenchmen. 'He thought the loss of the town had disgraced him. He accepted the sentence.'

Père Joseph sat silent.

'And the sentence was passed by the Baron de Creil and the Captain du Plessis to satisfy France. I had no part in it, your Excellency. I did not sign the order. I protested; it was done for the sake of France.'

And Père Joseph sat silent. Ludwig sprang up, flushing.

'In the name of God what would you have?' he cried angrily. 'A man your own officers condemn — you come to me and talk of murder! Am I to answer for your men's work? By God, am I to answer to you at all?'

And still Père Joseph sat silent. Ludwig broke out again.

'I am your ally, but not your slave. What is it to me what your men do? What would you have of me?' he cried, seeing the steady, stern eyes were

on him still. 'Answer!' he screamed, and he took a step towards the monk and raised his hand. Turenne's sword flashed out:

'Back!' he said harshly; and Ludwig changed colour and stumbled into his chair.

But still Père Joseph sat silent. A heavy step rang on the stair with the clash and jingle of spurs; by the door it paused and the three men silent within heard a murmur from the guard, and then a loud voice crying:

'Prince Ludwig will give audience to the Marshal of Solgau!' Karl of Erbach strode in. The stains of the road were on his cloak and boots; his hat was wet and bedraggled; but the three others had no eyes for this as he stood with his gloved hand in his swordbelt, looking sharply round the room:

'Who has done this?' he cried.

The Capuchin, fumbling in his gown, pulled out the warrant and held it out to him. Karl read it and drew in his breath.

'So,' he said, with a glance at Père Joseph and Turenne; and his hand closed on the parchment. 'And this was done in the castle of Lichtenstein?' he cried, looking down at Ludwig.

'No work of mine,' said Ludwig lightly. 'If Solgau takes it ill — if Solgau will be repaid — ask France, Count of Erbach!'

'Are murders often done in your castle without your will?' said the Count of Erbach. 'I did not come to haggle over a crime. To you, your Highness, and you, sir,' he bowed stiffly to Ludwig and the Capuchin — 'Solgau and the Prince of Solgau must speak. I come to take back the Princess Dorothea.'

Turenne started; his frowning face relaxed, and he bent over the chair to whisper to the Capuchin. The old monk, grown grey in statecraft, nodded slightly, and his eyes lit up as he shot one quick glance at Karl of Erbach and turned again to Ludwig. But Ludwig, too, saw what it meant, and for all he was a coward he took heart to face these big stern foes; he fought for the crown of Solgau.

'These are strange words,' he said and he drew himself up. 'You forget your place, Count of Erbach. The Princess Dorothea is my wife, and I am Prince in Lichtenstein.'

'I forget nothing,' said the Count of Erbach, 'least of all how the house of Solgau has fared in Lichtenstein. I come to take the Princess of Solgau back to her own land.'

'I do not suffer insults,' cried Ludwig. 'Go, sir!' and he pointed to the door. But Karl of Erbach did not move, and the Capuchin spoke quickly and softly:

'Since the Prince von Lichtenstein has shown us how much the word of France weighs with him, he will not refuse me this boon. Let the Princess Dorothea go back to her father.'

Karl looked down at the monk in surprise, and Père Joseph met his glance steadily. But Ludwig, looking venomously from one to the other, fell on the eyes of the Vicomte de Turenne:

'It is an insult,' he said feebly. 'She will not go'; for he thought Dorothea still loved him.

'Ask her,' said Turenne. He thought that could not be.

'It is but a little thing to ask beside the death of a Prince,' said the Capuchin softly. Ludwig rose slowly and walked towards the door.

'I will ask her, then,' he said over his shoulder. But Turenne pushed by him roughly.

'We will not trouble your Highness,' he said, and he opened the door and called the lieutenant.

'The Marshal of Solgau begs audience of the Princess Dorothea,' he said quickly. Then he turned and walked up to the Count of Erbach, who watched him in surprise. He took Karl by the arm and stepped aside into the window.

'Count, we deal with a knave. Believe me, we are no worse than fools,' he whispered. Karl looked at him sternly. 'I tell you no fine stories.

It was not by our will,' and he nodded at the Capuchin. 'I only give you my word.' For a moment the two men looked in each other's face, then Karl bowed.

'I see that is true, monsieur,' said he.

The Princess came in, and Karl, turning, started and caught his breath and clapped his hand on his sword. This was not the light-hearted girl he had known at Solgau — a girl with dancing eyes and smiling lips and lithe light step. He saw a woman who had borne the hardest of all the blows that can be dealt to her kind; a woman whose cheeks were pale, whose eyes were weary, who came listlessly in and looked fearfully round the room seeking him. He took a step forward, fell on his knee and kissed her hand.

'I come to take your Highness back to Solgau.'

She shrank back in her chair.

'Ah, no,' she cried; 'I can never go back to Solgau.' And Ludwig sighed with relief that his wife, too, was a fool.

Karl rose slowly to his feet.

'Not go to Solgau?' he asked slowly; he paused for a moment. 'It is with the good will of the Prince von Lichtenstein. Let me take your Highness back to Solgau in safety and honour,' and at that word she laughed.

'No, no; I cannot go,' she cried wildly. 'Count — Count!' She beckoned to him and he knelt by her side. 'Do not speak of me to my father,' she whispered. He bowed his head over her hand and kissed it.

'Come back with me, Dorothea!' he said softly, holding her hand in his.

'Do not ask me, do not ask me!' she cried, and drew her hand away. And Prince Ludwig was surprised that she loved him so much. But only the Capuchin understood.

'We trouble her Highness,' he said, and he rose slowly. 'Prince Ludwig, I beg you excuse us. Come, Turenne,' for Turenne's gaze was fixed on Dorothea. As the monk passed her he laid his wrinkled hand on her golden hair.

'*Benedic, Domine,*' he said softly. 'My daughter, Christ is kind.'

The Count of Erbach, lingering after them, asked again:

'You will not come?' She shook her head wildly, and he went out with his eyes on the ground.

When they had gone, Prince Ludwig licked his lips and moved his chair to sit by her.

'Ah, lass, I knew you loved me too well to leave me,' he said softly, and put his arm round her. She sprang away from his touch.

'Loved you?' she cried, and laughed. 'Loved you? Go, go; in God's name, go!' Prince Ludwig went out.

In the little guard-room the Capuchin was telling Karl of Erbach a plain story, without a twist of fact or phrase — the story of the Baron de Creil and his sentence.

'There is the story, Count,' he said at last; 'and as I tell it to you so I would have you tell it to the Prince of Solgau. Soon I myself will come to Solgau' — he paused and lowered his voice — 'to treat of Ludwig von Lichtenstein. Till then, if it was a fool who spoke here for France, it shall be a fool no longer.' He pointed to Turenne, and Turenne, with his hand on the back of Père Joseph's chair, said slowly:

'And I promise the Marshal of Solgau that I will care for the Princess Dorothea as my own life and my own honour till the day when she is free from Ludwig von Lichtenstein — and after.'

'I trust the word of the Vicomte de Turenne,' said Karl; and he turned to the Capuchin. 'Sir, I think you speak true; I will tell your tale to the Prince of Solgau. But the heir of Solgau has been murdered by an officer of France in the castle of a French ally, and he may ask justice of France on the murderers.'

'There shall be justice,' said the Capuchin slowly; and Karl von Erbach rode away to Solgau. Père Joseph, sitting quietly in the guard-room staring at the wine-stained table, slowly passed his schemes through his mind, shifted the pawns on his board, and altered his game to play it without the aid of Prince Ludwig von Lichtenstein. And at last his thoughts strayed to the day when justice should be done for the murder; and he thought of his general, the fiery Duke of Weimar; he saw, in his mind, the fierce rush of Bernhard's men and the Lichtensteiners fleeing before them; he saw Bernhard's cold scorn of the coward who was Prince of Lichtenstein, and his grim face smiled.

But Père Joseph was only a man.

Because he was a man, suddenly, beyond all this, he remembered the shame on Dorothea's weary face, and the work of his own servant, the Baron de Creil.

'*Deus, Deus, propitius esto mihi peccatori!*' he muttered.

CHAPTER X

OF THE VALUE OF VELVET

At Solgau the minister of France was a man quite unlike the Baron de Creil; save only in one thing — that men often thought him a fool. But the Comte de Lormont did not grow angry at their mistake; he smiled lazily at them and used it, till in time the men who had to do with him found to their surprise that the Comte de Lormont was something more than fine clothes and a yawn and a smile.

On a warm December day the Comte de Lormont, who found the good people of Solgau a little tiresome, wandered carelessly down from the great gate of the castle to the pool, that is like the eyes of the Lady Yolande. He dusted the top of a dark slab of rock, and sat down gently.

'Ah!' he yawned. 'I wonder what Turenne is doing,' he thought to himself. 'Some day he will be a great man, the illustrious Henri. He believes everything is important; I never could. So he can think about everything; I never could. Most things

are tiresome. Are all things tiresome? I believe not. I can think about some things. I wonder what that fellow is doing who hit our holy father back? He does not love us; and yet — I wonder — I wish he were on our side. But he believes in peace. Well, I should believe in peace if the war were in France. Ah! what is this?' There was a loud splash in the pool behind him. 'One of the good people of Solgau drowns himself in *ennui?*' He rose and walked lazily round the edge of the pool. 'My friend, you are too interested in your own salvation,' he said aloud. A little dog was splashing aimlessly in deep water and yelping. On the bank, leaning forward over the pool, stood a girl calling to it.

'Wulf, Wulf!' she cried. 'Oh, Wulf, Wulf!' and patted her dress. She looked round and saw Lormont. 'Help him, please; please, help him!' she said eagerly. Lormont bowed.

'Greater pleasure hath no man than this, mademoiselle,' said he, as he flung off his cloak and hat. He glanced down at his clothes with a rueful smile, and dived into the pool.

As he scrambled out with the spaniel in his hand, the little yelping beast snapped at him.

'Oh, Wulf, you ungrateful doggie!' cried his mistress, holding out her arms for him.

'We none of us like to be saved,' said the Comte de Lormont, while the water dripped from him to the ground. 'But, indeed, he is very wet, mademoiselle,' and he held Wulf at arm's length by the back of his neck, turning him slowly round. Wulf yelped and kicked. 'So we give thanks for salvation,' said Lormont placidly.

'Oh, but you hurt him,' cried the girl; 'please give him to me,' she held out her hands to Lormont. 'I thank you very much indeed, but please give him to me.'

'He drips,' said Lormont looking about him: 'ah, permit me, mademoiselle!' he caught up his grey velvet cloak, wrapped Wulf in it and handed the bundle to Wulf's mistress. She took it eagerly.

'Wulf, you bad doggie,' she said, and she kissed Wulf's cold nose and caressed him. Wulf decided to yelp no longer. Then his mistress looked up. 'Oh so fine a cloak!' she said. 'I am so sorry'; but there was something besides regret in her voice and her eyes. Lormont noticed that they were brown and deep and bright.

'Vanity, mademoiselle, vanity,' said Lormont solemnly and shook his head. The girl smiled at him, and a dimple came in her cheek.

'Wulf thanks you very much for your vanity, sir,' she said with a curtsey.

'I did not guess it,' said Lormont, and he glanced at his finger.

'Oh, but he does,' said the girl. 'I hope he has not hurt you,' and she put Wulf under one arm. Lormont held out his hand to her; she took it and looked anxiously at all the fingers moving them softly apart.

'But I do not see anything,' she said at last, and while his hand still lay in hers she looked up into his face.

'Nor did I,' said the Comte de Lormont; and he met her eyes.

'Oh!' she cried, and she blushed and dropped his hand quickly.

'One sinner is rewarded,' said Lormont, with a wave of his hand to Wulf. Wulf growled. 'Consider the temptations of the other — also my poor cloak. The pool, mademoiselle, was wet; but I will not go till I am forgiven.'

'Oh, yes, and you will be cold and ill,' the girl said. 'Do not stay here, Monsieur le Comte. I — I will be kind to your cloak.' She looked at him roguishly, trying not to smile. Her little mouth twitched and quivered, her eyes sparkled with delight; a brighter colour had stolen into her cheeks.

Lormont sat stolidly down on a rock.

'I am very obstinate, mademoiselle,' said he;

'beyond doubt I shall be very ill; but I will have absolution before I die.'

The girl gave him a sidelong glance and then looked across the pool.

'You must indeed be very cold,' she murmured.

'I ought to be,' Lormont admitted, and she did not answer.

In a moment or two: 'But I want to go back to the castle, Monsieur le Comte,' she said plaintively.

'I will be buried here by the pool,' Lormont answered. 'I die in the only true faith; a sinner, penitent but unforgiven. Farewell, mademoiselle,' and he held out his hand. At first she watched him with a whimsical look on her face, and her head a little on one side. Then:

'Will you escort me back to the castle, Monsieur le Comte de Lormont?' she said, turning away from him. Lormont, looking at her straight lissome figure and its slender curves, sprang up and took her hand gently. She tried to draw it away, but his fingers closed on the wrist.

'Mademoiselle is merciful,' said he, and he swept off his hat, bowed over her hand and kissed it.

'Vanity, monsieur, vanity,' the girl murmured with downcast eyes.

'Still, it pleased — the dog,' said Lormont.

'The velvet is very fine,' she answered, and

turned quickly to the cloak. 'But Wulf, ah Wulf, I am afraid it is ruined. And it must have been worth so much, monsieur.'

'I shall value it highly,' said Lormont, and he bowed.

'But he was very wet and his hair is so long — it is all stained,' said the girl sadly.

'But what, after all, is velvet, mademoiselle?' Lormont said slowly.

'Some think much of it, do they not, Monsieur le Comte?' she cried, and glanced at his dripping finery.

'I have at least spoilt them,' said he, following her eyes.

'Ah! it must grieve you, Monsieur le Comte!'

'Beyond doubt, it should grieve me,' said Lormont.

'Such charming velvet!' the girl cried quickly.

'And such cold water!' groaned Lormont.

'And the ribands are spoilt, too.'

'Too true, mademoiselle,' said Lormont, and he sighed. 'They were charming ribands!' She looked up at him sharply with a touch of scorn on her lip. 'Still you gave me your hand,' he said quietly, and his eyes looked into hers. She drew away from him.

'You took it, Monsieur le Comte,' she said coldly.

Lormont looked up to the heavens.

'I wonder if that is true,' he murmured. She stopped.

'Monsieur le Comte!' she cried and stamped her foot.

'For if I thought I had taken it I should have to be sorry for my velvet,' said Lormont quietly. He saw the colour darken her neck and a smile come over her face. 'Did I take it, mademoiselle?'

She was silent for a moment.

'I — I am glad you are not sorry for your velvet, Monsieur le Comte,' she said with one quick laughing glance.

And Lormont — who having got what he wanted, should have yawned — sighed as he thought that he was too wet to touch her. They had come almost to the gate of the castle.

'Yes, that is my name,' said Lormont quickly. 'But indeed, mademoiselle, you are wiser than I. I have never heard yours.'

'Oh, that is likely, monsieur,' she answered with a toss of her head. 'It is folly,' and she walked on quickly with her little chin held high.

'You wrong it, mademoiselle,' said Lormont confidently.

'I may judge my own name,' she answered.

'You may not slander it,' said Lormont quietly.

She started and looked at him defiantly. 'But indeed, madamoiselle, this is not fair; I am Léon de Lormont, as you know. Is it fair that I should not know your name?'

'You may know it,' she cried quickly. 'I am called Amaryllis. Is it not a foolish name? Prince Eberhard gave it me.'

Lormont grasped at the chance.

'Amaryllis,' he said slowly, looking down at her face with a smile. 'Amaryllis — Amaryllis. Indeed, it is a charming name. Amaryllis,' he repeated softly.

She smiled a little and blushed.

'It appears to please you, monsieur,' she said. They had reached the castle. 'And indeed I will do what I can for your cloak. And I thank you.' She swept him a curtsey.

Lormont bowed very low and Amaryllis tripped away. In her own room she took Wulf out of his cloak and spread it carefully on a chair. Then, as she rubbed the little spaniel dry, she hid her face in his hair:

'Oh Wulf, Wulf, I wonder what you have done?" she whispered, and kissed him. She set the dog down and rolled him over on the floor. 'Wulf, you sad, sad doggie,' she said, and her laughing face was red.

The Comte de Lormont walked slowly across the courtyard.

'So that is the sister of the Lady Yolande,' he said aloud.

He called his servant and the man followed him up the stairs.

'Ah, but monsieur is wet,' he cried anxiously.

'Yes, I suppose so,' said the Comte de Lormont.

'Monsieur has fallen in ——?' asked the servant with a gesture towards the pool.

'Yes, that is so,' said the Comte de Lormont.

CHAPTER XI

AIUNT — QUID AIUNT? AIANT!

KARL OF ERBACH had come back to Solgau. His men stood in the courtyard telling their news to an anxious startled crowd. The Comte de Lormont as he passed through them met many an angry look, and one rough trooper did not move to let him pass. Lormont tapped him gently on the shoulder:

'You are troublesome, my friend,' said he; 'that is foolish.' The man, turning with an oath, met Lormont's cool proud stare and drew back; and Lormont, seeing the Baron von Schwartzsee, changed his path.

'Is there news, my dear Baron?' he asked. The Baron turned, saw he was a Frenchman, and frowned.

'Prince Maximilian has been murdered by your friends and the Prince von Lichtenstein.' Lormont stood silent for a moment.

'My friends do not murder, Baron,' he said coldly.

'Oh, curse your quibbles,' cried the Baron, and told the story. Lormont, tapping gently on the

ground with his foot listened without questioning. The Baron, ended, looked at Lormont's calm face.

'Ay, you care little,' he said with a sneer.

'Your master, Prince Ludwig, is the wickedest fool in Europe,' said Lormont quietly with a sharp ring in his voice. 'Some day I shall tell him so.' But the Baron von Schwartzsee thought Lormont a fool.

In the castle Prince Eberhard welcomed the Count of Erbach amid the crowd of courtiers who had kept Christmas at Solgau. He sat in the great hall of Solgau, high on the daïs in his gilded chair, and his nobles stood round him. On the dark oak panels hung the bright arms of the men who had held rule in Solgau; the old princes who had dealt now justly, now unjustly, by their people, who had wrought in folly and cruelty sometimes, but had never faltered or played the coward. That was the glory of Solgau.

'Ah, Karl, back from the wars, then! So you have come back to tell us — tell us ——' cried the Prince.

'I have brought tidings to your Highness,' said Karl gravely — 'bad tidings.' A dusty ray of light poured down on his firm, strong face.

'Ay, Karl? Indeed, indeed? Bad tidings from you?'

'Weissberg has fallen to the enemy,' said Karl.

'What, what? Weissberg?' stammered Prince Eberhard. 'And Max? What of Max? Speak, Karl, in God's name! What of Max?' His voice broke into a scream.

'Prince Maximilian reached Lichtenstein,' said Karl, and Prince Eberhard gasped in relief. Very quickly Karl went on. 'Then he was tried by two officers of France in the presence of Ludwig von Lichtenstein for the loss of the town. He was beheaded yesterday in the castle of Lichtenstein.'

A low hoarse murmur ran among the nobles of Solgau. 'Lichtenstein, Lichtenstein,' and they looked angrily at one another, and hands sought sword hilts.

'Beheaded?' cried the old man. 'Max, my son, beheaded? Max is dead at Lichtenstein? My boy, my boy!' he rocked himself to and fro in his chair, murmuring the words again and again. Karl stood looking down and waiting. At last the old man raised his head.

'And you stood by — you did nothing!' he cried. Karl drew himself up.

'I did not hear of it till the thing was done,' he said. 'When I heard I went at once to Lichtenstein.'

'Yes, yes, and you killed him?' cried the old man.

'No, your Highness, I ——' and he stopped: he remembered that Dorothea had bidden him say nothing of her to her father. 'I came to tell you,' he ended lamely.

'To tell me?' cried Prince Eberhard. 'A Prince of Solgau is murdered and you — you — you come to tell me?' There was a stir in the little throng of courtiers and many sneering faces turned to Karl of Erbach as he stood alone facing the old Prince.

'The Marshal of Solgau,' some one whispered loud enough for Karl to hear and an ill-meant laugh passed round. The old man sprang up with wild grief.

'Marshal of Solgau,' he cried, 'ay, Marshal of Solgau! Your Prince is murdered and you come back with your sword clean, so brave is the Marshal of Solgau — so brave, so brave,' he repeated trembling. He pressed his hand to his head. 'Ah! and Dorothea, she is there, too, in that devil's hands.' He looked at Karl for an answer, but Karl said nothing. He could not speak of the Princess Dorothea. Prince Eberhard laughed. 'What is a Princess to the Marshal of Solgau?' He pointed at Karl with a long, thin finger, and laughed again as he fell back in his chair.

Karl stood silent before him fronting the bitter sneering faces of the men and women who saw in him only a convicted coward.

'But, indeed, he loves his office,' one of them whispered again.

'Man, why do you cheat me?' cried the Prince. 'If you march with my power and in my name, why — why — and my boy is dead!' He hid his face in his hands.

And Karl of Erbach stood still and silent, bearing the insults and the sneers with grim, set face. He saw clearly enough the easier path; how he might give up his place with one fierce answer to insult and sneer, follow the war, leading his own men from Erbach, and let Solgau and its Prince go their own way. He would not do it. The nobles of Solgau thought him a coward.

'Speak,' cried the old man again. 'Give it up; let me choose another; let me have a man — a man ——' and there was a murmur again in the crowd.

'I am Marshal of Solgau, your Highness,' said Karl, and the Baron von Rosenberg stepped quickly forward and bent over Prince Eberhard.

'Your Highness speaks too quickly; the news has been too much for your Highness. Will you not think of it again on the morrow?'

'The morrow?' cried Prince Eberhard. 'There is no morrow now — only — only ——'

'Your Highness has borne too much; you were better alone.'

'Ah, yes!' cried the old man. 'Better, better; leave me alone,' and unwillingly they went out.

Karl pushed through the crowd of enemies, and a man said in his face: 'So Solgau is shamed!' And as Karl went by in silence the man laughed. He went back to his own old room and sat down to think. He would not yield to distrust and insult. They thought he clung to the honours of his place as marshal. Let them think. He cared too much for Solgau to give it up because some of its people were fools. He would do his work; and the rest was no affair of his. The Baron von Rosenberg burst in on him.

'You'll keep it Karl?' he said gruffly.

'Ay!' The Baron looked at him keenly.

'They don't trust you.'

'I know,' said Karl; he looked up and met the other man's eyes. 'I trust myself; and, by God, I will go on to the end.'

'So!' said the Baron von Rosenberg. 'Then go back to the army. God knows what the old man will do. And Karl, Karl' — he caught at the

younger man's arm — 'kill us Ludwig von Lichtenstein.'

'Do you think I love him?' said Karl. He sat silent for a moment. 'The Baron von Schwartzsee goes with my men to hold his castle against Ludwig. I go back to Bernhard. The Frenchman Turenne cares for Dorothea' — he paused — 'and I will not shame Solgau,' he said slowly. He rose, and the Baron held out his hand. Karl's stern face lightened a little as he took it, and he gripped it hard.

As he went down the stairs he met Yolande; she looked away from him and drew her dress close round her. But Karl stood across her way, and looked into her angry eyes.

'Yolande, I do not say you are wrong. I see how you think of me. Will you wait before you judge me?' he said quietly.

'Wait?' she said in a low scornful voice. 'Can there be worse to hear?'

'If you meet me so I make no answer,' he said. 'Yolande, I only ask you for justice — wait till all this work is done.'

'What can there be to wait for from you?' she cried. 'The Count of Erbach is known well enough — so wise, so proud, so brave!'

Karl bowed his head gravely.

'I am answered,' he said. 'Some day, lady, you shall know you are wrong. And for what has been — if I could have done aught yesterday at Lichtenstein on my honour I say I would have done it!'

'Your — honour,' she said; 'your — honour!'

Karl stepped aside.

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CHAPTER XII

THE COMTE DE LORMONT WORKS FOR LOVE

ON the next day the Comte de Lormont sat alone reading a despatch from Père Joseph. His eye ran quickly down the long page, he tossed it away over the table, touched his moustache lightly and looked up at the panelled ceiling.

'I am angry; I am really angry,' he thought to himself. 'That is strange. Yet — ah! — I believe I do not love knaves,' he flicked a speck from his coat. 'I am quite sure I hate fools,' he said aloud: and then he smiled. 'Yet I maintain a considerable affection for myself. Ah! well, I think I will see Prince Eberhard. No! They tell me he is sick. I do not doubt it. His daughter is still at Lichtenstein. Thank God Henri is with her. I will go to the Baron von Rosenberg. The Baron von Rosenberg, yes certainly I will go to him; for his daughter has the sweetest mouth in Christendom,' and the Comte de Lormont looked at himself in his mirror and smiled. 'But indeed, Monsieur le Comte, you are a fool,' he said aloud, and there-

withal he turned away to go to the Baron von Rosenberg who was Lord Chamberlain of Solgau. He entered the Baron's room and bowed with a flourish of his hat.

'I give you good-day, Baron,' he said. The Baron nodded and did not speak. 'May I ask how does His Highness Prince Eberhard?'

'Ill enough,' said the Baron gruffly.

'I regret it,' Lormont answered.

'Humph!' growled the Baron.

'Believe me, Baron, you mistake,' said Lormont quietly. 'If Solgau has been wronged through France there is regret for it among others than the men of Solgau. And as Solgau has been wronged,' he went on more slowly, 'through France, France will take care that justice be done. And that I am charged to tell you.'

'Solgau can fight for herself,' said the Baron shortly.

'You take me amiss,' Lormont answered. 'I do not wonder. A Prince of Solgau is dead,' he paused: 'by our folly, Baron von Rosenberg. I do not say any more.'

The Baron looked at him and saw in the lazy blue eyes a strength that most men did not guess.

'I see,' he said. 'You are right, Comte de Lormont. I have to thank you.'

'But there is no need of thanks,' said Lormont quickly. 'You may trust the honour of France to make my words good. We do not make mistakes twice. I have to tell you that le Père Joseph will come soon to Solgau; and he prays that no change be made in the forces of Solgau till he speak with Prince Eberhard.'

The Baron bowed.

'We shall not do much,' he said; 'the Prince is very sick.'

'There was talk that I heard,' Lormont said thoughtfully, 'of the Count of Erbach. Some story of a new marshal, I think it was?' Baron von Rosenberg said nothing.

'That — is not true?' Lormont asked, looking up suddenly.

'No, not yet.'

'Ah!' said Lormont again. 'I think it would be folly, and folly is dangerous. But I heard that the Prince bade him give up his office,' he stopped for a moment, but the Baron made him no answer. 'Some others agreed with the Prince, I think — and said so. There were things not very easy to bear that were said to the Marshal of Solgau?'

'Ay, they jeered at him, Comte de Lormont,' said the Baron gruffly.

'But still he remains Marshal of Solgau,' said

Lormont, and he looked at the Baron. The Baron said nothing. 'Ah, I think I understand.'

'If you mean anything against the honour of the Count of Erbach you had best not say it to me,' cried the Baron fiercely, starting up. Lormont held up his hand.

'I have not been long in Solgau, Baron,' he said. 'And I do not admire men easily. But I see fields and workshops here for the huts and deserts all round you. And, faith, man is curious, Baron, and I sought about for the reason; and one tells me the Count of Erbach, and another tells me, the Marshal of Solgau, till I who am anxious to think only of myself, find that I am thinking of Karl — always Karl.' The Baron stared at him in surprise.

'I did not expect to hear a Frenchman say that,' he muttered.

'Ah! it is often a mistake to be honest,' Lormont answered; 'but sometimes — why sometimes, Baron, one feels it is only fair. I am sorry that the Marshal of Solgau does not love France, but in spite of that I am glad that Karl of Erbach is Marshal still. For, indeed, there will be work to do, and I think he will do it well.'

'Does not love France?' cried the Baron. 'Ay, but he hates Lichtenstein more! See,' he opened a door that led into another room and motioned to

Lormont. 'Oh! my daughters, Comte de Lormont,' he said carelessly, with a wave of his hand to Amaryllis and Yolande who sat together at work. Lormont, bowing, stole a glance to Amaryllis and saw a light flush come to her cheeks. As they curtsied he caught a shy smile.

'See!' said the Baron, not heeding his daughters, and he drew Lormont to a picture. Lormont looked carefully at the dull canvas and saw a face like Karl's, but less stern.

'This is before we came to Solgau?' asked Lormont.

'His father,' said the Baron. 'He was murdered on the Lichtenstein border. Guess if Karl hates them!'

'Yes, I knew,' said Lormont thoughtfully. He stepped back with his eyes on the picture. 'But — but I think this man was happy.'

Yolande started at his words and tried to see his face, and Lormont turning away from the picture said to her father:

'I have found more things than one in Solgau to make me honour her,' and both the girls were listening eagerly, 'but I do not think I have ever known a stronger man than the Count of Erbach.'

'Ay,' said the Baron von Rosenberg, and his eyes fell on Yolande, and he, who was the least

crafty of men, became in his own mind very cunning. 'I do not think you know my daughters: this is the Comte de Lormont, Yolande.'

'I am honoured beyond my hopes,' murmured Lormont. 'One who is but a stranger in Solgau had seen only from afar the ladies of Rosenberg,' and he bowed again, and looked at Amaryllis's shoes.

'The Comte de Lormont is too modest,' Amaryllis said. But the Baron broke in awkwardly:

'We were talking of the Count of Erbach, Yolande.' There was the trace of a frown on Lormont's forehead.

'What am I to say of him?' he murmured; and indeed he did not know. 'There are some men who disappoint us by being greater than we had chosen to believe,' and the chance shot told, for Yolande blushed as she said coldly:

'Monsieur le Comte knows the Count of Erbach?'

'There are some men whom one does not mistake,' said Lormont, and he saw Yolande's blush, and guessed that he was meant to be proxy for Karl. The position attracted him; Amaryllis was looking on. 'I prefer to think men my inferiors, but, alas! it is not always possible: I have an incontinent conscience and some brains. Yet they tell

me this conscience of mine spares me some trouble. I hear that it is unpleasant to discover that one has been wrong. But what would you have? I meet a stronger man than myself — for the world is large and fate unkind! — and my conscience cries to me that I must honour him. I do not know. I think it may be the easier way.'

'Monsieur is witty,' said Yolande coldly.

'Indeed, no, mademoiselle. I believe I am preaching a sermon, and doubtless I do it ill. But sometimes I feel, mademoiselle,' and he looked at Amaryllis, 'that I have mistaken my calling. In the Church I should without doubt have been a power. I feel it is in me to call other sinners to repentance. So sometimes when I hear of such doings as yesterday my soul ferments and out comes the sermon — like a cork from a cask. If I weary you I beg for your pardon: and put the sin to their account who pleased themselves yesterday — for indeed they deserve punishment — the fools who sneered yesterday at the Marshal of Solgau.' The Baron von Rosenberg rubbed his hands. This young man was doing his work very well. Yolande, with the colour coming and going in her cheeks, heard the sharp phrase ring in her ears again and again:

'They deserve punishment — the fools who sneered yesterday at the Marshal of Solgau!'

Doubts came up in her mind, doubts that were bitter and sweet at once. This man who could have little reason to love Karl — this man who stood for the very things Karl hated — this man with his vanity and foppish speech praised Karl as she had never heard him praised before, said frankly that Karl was a greater man than he, the Comte de Lormont. Had she been wrong, and Karl right after all? This Frenchman, whose trade was State affairs, her father who had grown old serving Solgau, had nothing but praise for the man she despised.

Lormont, watching her closely, saw that his words had touched her:

'But our good friends in Solgau are so hasty. I do not say they do ill to be angry with their faithful ally in Lichtenstein; eh, Baron? But what does the Marshal of Solgau in the same galley as the amiable Ludwig? The good ladies of Solgau yearned for the villain's head on a charger: eh, but it takes long to carve. Well, mademoiselle, but I weary you; forgive an uneasy sinner for dragging out the goods of his trade. Why should you care for statecraft and policy and an enemy's opinion of the Count of Erbach?' he paused for a moment watching her. 'I talk idly: it is my one pet sin. Why should I defend him? I doubt he would do less for me. And, alas! mademoiselle, I fear he is

one of the terrible men who do always better than you expect and make no helpful mistakes.' He shook his head solemnly. 'I believe that many will hang their heads when the Marshal of Solgau comes home.'

There was silence for a moment, and then Yolande, who had been bending over her embroidery, rose.

'I beg Monsieur le Comte to excuse me,' she said in a steady voice, and Lormont opened the door as she went out.

'Ay,' said the Baron. 'You speak very well.'

'It is my misfortune,' sighed Lormont, 'therefore my enemies are many.'

'Is that the reason, Monsieur le Comte?' cried Amaryllis.

'It accounts for most,' said Lormont. 'The others I have been unfortunate enough to oblige.'

'We must pray to be preserved from your good will!' she said quickly.

'Some prayers are useless,' said Lormont. The Baron felt himself puzzled and uncomfortable; he looked at Lormont, but Lormont had no notion of going.

'Well, monsieur, I am glad you came to me this morning. I will speak to Prince Eberhard when he is more himself.' The Baron stopped and hesitated,

for Lormont only bowed and smiled without moving.

'My father is very busy, Monsieur le Comte,' murmured Amaryllis, anxious about a stitch.

'Pray do not let me detain you, Baron,' cried Lormont, and the Baron, who began to see more clearly and knew that he was in Lormont's debt, said:

'Do not let my daughter keep you, monsieur,' and went out, with a smile hidden in his beard.

Lormont sat down beside Amaryllis, and Amaryllis, still cumbered with stitching, said:

'At the other end of the room, quite the other end of the room, monsieur, there is some silk,' he rose with a sigh and a backward glance at her face. He could not see the laugh in her eyes.

'And there are some needles,' said Amaryllis pointing, without looking up. 'I want,' she turned her embroidery over, 'one needle' — she laid it on her knee and patted it — 'threaded with each colour.' Lormont groaned. 'I think — you had better go to the window,' she said, drawing a stitch carefully. He walked slowly away and began.

'My maid and I, we have done what we could, monsieur, and indeed we are very sorry, and so is Wulf, but I do not think you can be vain of the cloak any more. And your ribands — oh, I am afraid those poor ribands are spoilt, too, and what

are clothes without ribands, monsieur?' Lormont went stolidly on with his needles, and the girl from the couch, delighted with her game, said innocently: 'If monsieur would tell me — I know so little about such things — where I could get the best ribands. I wanted some for Wulf. I think ribands would look so charming on Wulf, monsieur, do not you? He would admire himself so in rose-pink ribands!' and she looked up laughing at Lormont's back. He did not answer, and she sat there smiling with her head on one side. Amid the peach blossom tint of her cheeks lay two tiny white dimples, and her brown eyes were very bright. Lormont did not answer or turn, and her smile faded a little; then suddenly he swung quickly round and caught her eyes. She bent over her work at once, but he was at the couch by her side.

'*Voilà*, mademoiselle!' he said, and he held out the needles in his palms.

'Put them down, please,' she said, tapping the couch at her side without looking up. He laid them at her feet and sat in the place she had touched.

'Now — now will you tell me if these colours are right?' she asked quickly. She felt her heart beat fast. He bent towards her and his arm touched hers.

'The colours are perfect,' said the Comte de Lor-

mont, but he was looking at her face. In a moment she looked up and met his eyes. Then Lormont kissed her.

'Monsieur!' she cried, springing up, and there was anger and fear in her face. Lormont rose too; his lazy eyes had grown eager and bright, and they met hers boldly.

'I will ask you to forgive me, Amaryllis,' he said very softly and quickly, 'and I will give you a reason. 'Forgive me, and let me be glad that I did it!'

She stamped her foot.

'Monsieur, you insult me!' she said.

'But, faith, I do not,' said Lormont. He took her hands in his, and she did not deny them. 'It is true I wear a velvet cloak, and there are even ribands on my clothes; but, indeed, you shall cut them off if you will, and there is a man inside. I tell him often he is but a fool, but he bids me complain to God. And I think he is passably honest, and I have not known him a coward and — and you have the sweetest mouth in all the world, my dear.' She was silent for a minute, and then:

'So of that I am glad, monsieur,' she said very softly, and she lifted it for Lormont to take.

And in this way the Comte de Lormont came by his own; but Yolande sat in her room looking out

over the wintry fields, doubting and hoping. She was torn this way and that by hopes that were half fears, and fears that were far other than hopes: if she were wrong — ah, if only she were wrong! Then her life would begin again from that day when the Pappenheimers came to Solgau. Yet, if she were wrong, how she must have hurt Karl! Her dark grey eyes were wet as she thought of his sad face; and Lormont's words were in her mind: 'Ah! but this man was happy.' Was it she, she wondered, who had brought the gloom to Karl's face? She remembered her words of yesterday, words that were meant to sting a coward. What if they had only wounded a man who loved her? Yet all the Court thought as she had thought yesterday; all had sneered at him — could they all be wrong? And then she was angry with herself: a woman, then, was to sneer at the man who loved her because others were against him? Here was a new creed for women! For she never doubted that Karl loved her still.

While she wavered thus Amaryllis came in, bright-eyed and smiling:

'Yolande!' she cried, and she ran to her sister and sat on her knee. 'Oh, my dear, my dear, I am very happy,' and she kissed Yolande and hid her face. Yolande drew her closer and kissed her cheek.

'I am very glad, dear,' she said, and they both understood.

At last Amaryllis looked up and saw tears still on her sister's face.

'Oh, Yolande, you do believe?' she asked gently.

'I don't know,' said Yolande, and her lip trembled. 'I — I think so,' and she cried on her sister's breast. Amaryllis whispered, bending down to her ear:

'You will be glad, dear; so glad.' And this time Yolande did not deny it.

CHAPTER XIII

A FIGHT IN THE DARK

BARON HILDEBRAND VON SCHWARTZSEE rode back to his castle to hold it against his own master by the aid of the men of Solgau; and Karl of Erbach, who sent him, went, with only one follower, his father's Scottish man-at-arms, to join Duke Bernhard and his army. The Scotsman rode a little behind, and his eye ran quickly and carefully over every curve in the ground, every clump of trees. It was mid-winter; the sky was dull, and the countryside bare and dark. Karl sat silently, looking straight before him and seeing little; and behind him the Scotsman whistled between his teeth,

> Oh, wha daur meddle wi' me?
> Oh, wha daur meddle wi' me?
> My name it is little Jock Elliott,
> And wha daur meddle wi' me?

Karl, with his hand on his hip, sitting a little back in the saddle, did not hear him. His mind was far away from Jock Elliott, far away, indeed, from Solgau. He was thinking of the mountains of Lichtenstein, where the Baron von Schwartzsee

had gone; of the narrow pass and the dark lake high on the mountain side; of Ludwig and what Ludwig would do. He tried hard to guess how Ludwig would meet the day when France and Solgau fell on him together; and the more he thought of it the surer he felt that those men he had sent to hold the strongest place in Lichtenstein against Ludwig would not be wasted. For it was not often that the Marshal of Solgau repented of his plans. And now that he was going away, scorned and distrusted, his plans grew very clear to him and his courage rose higher. He was sure of his strength: and his mind was made up to crush Ludwig, to bring Dorothea back to Solgau, and then — then to ask Yolande for another answer. Since she would not believe him without proof — and he was too strong a man to blame her, even to himself, for that, though her words had cut deep — since she would not trust him when others doubted, he meant to bring her the day when others should believe and no man should say of Yolande's lover that he had shamed Solgau. He asked himself whether any man could blame her — why she should believe in a man whom no one else would trust — how could a man whose courage was yet to prove be aught to her; and he confessed to himself that he did not know the answer. But Yolande could have told him.

So the two men travelled southwards through the brown fields and the wet leafless woods till they came at last to the long straight line of grass-clad hills that lie over against Hornberg. They followed the old track that the legionaries had travelled long ago ere ever a prince held rule in Solgau, the wide-worn path where the clumps of old gnarled yews are set like guide posts on the way. And at last the track winds down the hillside and cuts clean through a grey beech wood to a little combe and a farmstead. Thither came Karl and his man late on the third day since they left the Castle of Solgau. There was a light in the farmstead window. The Scotsman came up beside his master.

'Stop here, sir?' he asked. But Karl, peering forward, reined his horse up sharply, and Jock, looking across Karl's horse, muttered an oath. They sprang down together. The faint light from the farmstead window lay steady across a woman's body. Her clothes were torn from her bosom, and by her heart lay two wet red wounds. The men, bending over her face to see if she still breathed, caught the glare from her starting eyes. Karl's hand clenched. The Scotsman began to whistle softly:

Oh, wha daur meddle wi' me?
Oh, wha daur meddle wi' me?

But the woman was dead. The Scotsman rose and crept noiselessly towards the house. Looking away from the agony on her bruised face, Karl closed her eyes and laid his scarf over them. He took his cloak from his shoulders and covered her. Then as he rose slowly he saw that her right hand was clenched on the hilt of a wet dagger. His hand went to take it from her, but he could not undo her fingers easily; he felt a touch at his elbow and saw the Scotsman beside him.

'Four: Pappenheimers: drinking,' the man whispered, looking eagerly at his master. And Karl, as he looked down, forgot that his life was not his own to risk, forgot that he was Marshal of Solgau, and only remembered that he was a man of Solgau and this a woman of his own land.

'Come on!' he muttered, and drew his sword.

The room in the farmstead was lit by a single smoky lamp, and round a table laden with food and great flagons of beer four men lolled carelessly in their chairs. Their faces were red and swollen, with loose lips, and they laughed and shouted roughly, jeering at the dead woman. On them the door burst suddenly open, and two men with flashing swords ran at them fiercely crying: 'Solgau, Solgau!' They stumbled to their feet, and one of them jumping back from Karl's thrust fell against the table

and did not escape. But his fall shook the lamp over and in a moment the room was dark. Karl sprang back to the doorway, feeling round him with his sword and waiting. Across the room he heard a sword clash and clash again, and then three notes of the Scotsman's tune. He came forward quickly thrusting into the darkness before and behind, and listening. Something fell with a heavy thud; he heard the three notes again; and then his sword touched something that moved. He sprang forward lunging and touched it again; he felt a blade meet his own, and stepping quickly to the right he thrust low to his full reach. At once the weight of the body hung on his sword; as it fell he stabbed it again.

Then he drew back to the door and waited a moment; he could only hear a faint shuffle in the darkness. Someone was coming towards him, and he heard only one man's feet.

'Safe, Jock?' he asked quickly, and moved at once from his place.

'Ay,' said Jock's voice, close to where Karl had been the moment before. 'Ay,' and then sharply, 'So, my friend, so,' and he heard another man stagger and fall. 'That is all, sir. Are you safe?'

'Ay; get a light,' said Karl quietly; and through

the darkness he heard a man groan. There came a sharp sound and a dull spark as the Scotsman struck a light. In a minute the lamp was alight again and the Scotsman, catching up his sword, jumped at one man who tried to rise and ran him through.

'What? Why?' he cried bending over the man. 'See this, sir!' for the Pappenheimer wore the yellow and black of Lichtenstein. And the man rolling over grinned at Karl and died. On the table lay a black Pappenheimer's coat such as the three others wore. Karl walked round looking at their faces, but he knew none of them; and the Scotsman setting down a flagon of beer and rubbing his mouth with his hand nodded.

'Ay, ay; it's what I told you, sir,' he said; 'no Pappenheimer ever left a pig behind. These were shams.'

Karl tugged at his chin. Something of this he had guessed before; the first Pappenheimers, he had long thought, were sent by Lichtenstein or France to frighten Solgau into alliance. And the Pappenheimers who lay in wait for Prince Eberhard — of them, too, there had been strange tales. So the riddle was solved.

'But God knows what they do here,' said the Scotsman.

'Call up the devil, Jock ——' said Karl. 'He

will not always lie down again. Here is more of Ludwig's work.'

'Ay, ay,' said the Scotsman indifferently. To him it was only a little scene in the long play of the war. Princes fought — and their people died — for that was the way of the world. Men were made to give and take knocks; and women — well, he was not a woman.

A child's voice cried from the garden:

'Mother, little mother, where are you?'

'Eh? Humph, the child has luck,' said the Scotsman, and the child opened the door.

'Mother, little mother — oh!' he stood staring round-eyed at Karl with a white scared face. Karl took the lamp and held it in front of him so that the dead men lay in shadow; he came up to the child and laid his hand on his head.

'Mother is gone, lad,' said he. The boy looked up at him trembling.

'Gone?' he cried. 'You — oh, you are the Wise Count, sir!'

'Am I? How do you know me?' said Karl. He sat down on the doorstep and put the lamp in the porch in front of him; and he took the child on his knee. The boy shrank from him at first; but when he found Karl's touch was gentle gave way a little.

'I saw you at Solgau, sir, when mother took me

to see father go away to the wars. She said you were the Wise Count. Where is mother, sir?' he asked anxiously. And the dagger lay wet in her hand.

'Mother is gone, lad,' said Karl again.

'But mother promised me baked apples; I know she would give me them,' cried the child. 'She told me to come back very quick with the fir cones and she would give me baked apples. I am sure she would, sir!'

'You know father went away to the wars to fight wicked men,' said Karl, in a voice that only Yolande and his mother had heard, 'and to-day some of those wicked men came here. And mother was all alone and these men — killed her.'

'Killed her! Killed her!' cried the child. 'Mother is dead! Oh, mother, little mother!' he sobbed. 'Oh, sir, why did you let them? Mother, mother, little mother!' and Karl, soothing him and drawing him closer, said sadly:

'I came too late'; and the child sobbed louder. He wore himself out with grief at last, and Karl with his strong hand on the little white cheek said, 'And you must go and find father, lad.'

'Yes, find father,' cried the child, 'find father! And he will kill them.'

'I have done that,' said Karl, and the child looked

at him timidly. Come, lad, you must kiss mother and come away to your father.' He rose, took up the lamp and took the child's hand in his and walked across the garden. He uncovered her face, and let the light fall on it only faintly before the lamp went out. The child fell on the ground and kissed her in the darkness murmuring:

'Little mother, little mother... Ah! but she is very cold,' he cried.

'Come away,' said Karl; and they walked back in the dark.

The Scotsman had found another lamp and lit it, and sat drinking among the dead men.

'Is there another room, lad?' said Karl, but the child's mind was numb. Karl took him up and holding him so that he should not see the bodies looked round for another room. He found it.

'The light, and some food,' he said shortly, and he sat down trying to make the child eat. 'Dig a grave,' he said under his breath, and the Scotsman went out. 'Come, lad, try it,' he said again and again, but the child could not swallow, till at last Karl saw that he was giving pain and laid the boy on the bed and covered him gently. He sat with him a while till the unsteady breathing grew quieter, and then softly he went out.

Jock Elliott was digging the woman's grave and

whistling his old tune in time to the strokes of the spade:

> Oh, wha daur meddle wi' me?
> Oh, wha daur meddle wi' me?

He stopped as his master came up:

'Will it serve, sir? We had best be moving; may be more of them.' Karl nodded. Jock, going to lift her, saw the dagger.

'Pity to bury this,' he said, and tried to move it. 'Phew! she has hold!'

'Let be!' said Karl sharply; and they took her and laid her in the trench in Karl's cloak. And the dagger was wet in her hand. So they buried her in her own garden, the men who had come too late; and as they covered up the body and hid the marks of its agony and its shame, Karl muttered a prayer to the God who had helped her not at all in life.

Then as they turned away:

'And those fellows, sir?' said Jock with a nod to the house.

'Fling them out on the dung!' said Karl.

And afterwards they rode away with the child to join Duke Bernhard and the army.

So Solgau fell deeper in debt to Prince Ludwig von Lichtenstein.

CHAPTER XIV

ROSEMARY AND RUE

In the little guard-room at Lichtenstein Castle temperance held absolute sway. Monsieur le Vicomte de Turenne preferred that the soldiers of the Most Christian King should be at all times able to serve him; and the men, grumbling at first, felt the grasp of a stronger hand till they began to find that Turenne knew how to value good service as well as bad, and caught something of his own scorn for the slovenly troopers of Lichtenstein, who sat over their beer and their dice while Turenne led his Frenchmen out to drill. Turenne, watching them grow quick and ready under his hand, had thoughts that were not all of the work he was doing. He began to reckon how many of the Lichtenstein troopers his own men were worth, and to long for the day when he might show Ludwig von Lichtenstein that he was a fool, and punish him because he was a villain; avenge the murder of Dorothea's brother and kill her husband. Then he wavered; if he should do that, what of Dorothea? She hated Ludwig; she

must hate Ludwig. Of that he was sure enough; and yet could she ever love the man who had killed her husband? It was hard to forego the delight of revenge on Ludwig, and yet so it must be. He would break Ludwig's power, and some one else should kill him. So the Vicomte de Turenne became less ambitious than Karl of Erbach, who meant to do both these things. But each of them had settled his own part.

One morning Turenne had led his men out over the drawbridge to their daily drill, when he saw close to them a slim figure on a grey Arab mare.

'Salute!' he cried sharply, and the swords flashed out in the pale wintry sun in honour of the Princess Dorothea. She bowed with a tired smile. Turenne stopped.

'Can I be your Highness's escort?' he asked gently. She hesitated and glanced at the men and then at him again with the shy frightened look that now never left her eyes. Turenne saw her doubts, turned in his saddle, and caught one of his men grinning.

'Ride on, Armand, and drill them, drill them,' he said sharply.

'Ay, I'll drill them, sir,' growled the lieutenant, and the men groaned. There were no bowels of mercy in Jean Armand. The troops clattered off.

'How can I serve your Highness?' Turenne asked again.

'I — I — I want my brother's grave, monsieur,' she said, and her lip trembled. Turenne saw a little wreath in her hand.

'Your brother has all men's pity and honour, your Highness,' said Turenne; and that was not true, for he thought Prince Maximilian a weak fool. He saw that her eyes were full of tears and her lips quivering, and he who had never tried before to comfort any one went on talking to save her pain; 'and we Frenchmen, through whose folly he died, cannot absolve ourselves. It is poor comfort, your Highness, I know, to say that he died like a man of honour; and yet he has left you that; no one need be ashamed to meet death as he did. You may be very proud of him. And there are those, your Highness, who would give their lives to have saved him, to have spared you pain.' His clumsy sentences failed him, and Dorothea, struggling to keep back her tears, said, with brimming eyes:

'I — I thank you, monsieur.'

'I wish you had cause,' said Turenne sadly. 'It is this way, your Highness.' He laid his hand on her rein, and they rode slowly along the hill-side through the pines. In the wood they came upon a little level space bare of trees, where the thin wiry

grass of the pine-woods grew thick. Turenne dismounted and held her stirrup; he tied the horses to a tree and walked with her hand lying inside his arm to a long mound stony and grey.

'He is buried there, your Highness,' he said, and he turned away.

She fell on her knees, and kissed the earth again and again; she laid the poor wreath at the head, and fell across the grave sobbing. The wreath was of rosemary and rue.

Turenne standing with his hand on a tree and looking down through the wood heard her sob.

At last he could bear it no longer, and he turned and went back again, and knelt on one knee by her side and touched her.

'Do not weep, do not weep,' he said hoarsely; 'it does no good.'

But still she sobbed and her body quivered, and he was helpless. And he loved her.

'Dorothea, Dorothea,' he groaned. But she did not hear him, and she let him lift her and lead her away with his arm round her. He threw his cloak on the grass.

'Will you sit?' he asked, and she sat down without answering and looked back wistfully at the grave and the dark wreath on it. Turenne stood beside her waiting; and he waited very long in silence. Then

daring to look at her face and seeing the pain on it he knelt down and took her hand.

'Will it please your Highness to go back?' he said. She started with a wild look at him.

'Back? back?' she murmured. 'Yes, back to him!' and she shuddered and rose unsteadily to her feet. He lifted her to her saddle and rode very close beside her, and his eyes flashed and a little smile began to come on his lips.

'If it please your Highness,' he said very softly. 'If you will trust yourself to me, you shall have no more to fear there or from any man. If only you will come with me no one shall give you pain again.' She turned and looked at him with wide startled eyes.

'I — I do not understand,' she murmured, and Turenne, looking at her beauty and her pain, forgot the Princess again.

'Dorothea, come with me,' he said eagerly; 'I will save you from that man.'

She started away from him, and a faint blush came over her pale face.

'Ah! How can you say it!' she cried. 'Go! go! Do not hurt me!' Turenne laid his hand on her arm.

'I did not mean that; if I made you think of it, forgive me. My men are only a mile away, and I

will bring you in safety and honour to Solgau. Do not go back to the castle; come to your father.'

She shook her head quickly.

'No, no, I cannot. You do not understand, ah! you do not understand'; and her blush grew darker.

Turenne only saw that he had given her fresh pain and could not guess why.

'Forgive me,' he said slowly.

'Indeed, indeed, it is not that I do not trust you, monsieur,' she said. 'And you have been kind. I thank you, I do thank you indeed!' and she laid her hand timidly on his arm. Turenne took it in his and kissed it.

'I am always the servant of your Highness,' he said. 'I wish I knew how to help you.'

'I thank you, monsieur,' said the girl sadly, and they rode slowly and silently through the wood. The pine-needles crackled beneath the horses' hoofs, and high in the air a raven was croaking. Now a pine-cone fell lightly to the ground, now the horses tossed their heads with clash of bit and bridle. But Turenne and the woman he loved rode back to Ludwig in silence.

CHAPTER XV

PRINCE LUDWIG GROWS KIND

SIDE by side they came up the hill, and side by side they rode across the drawbridge and into the castle. Some of the guards grinned at one another as they passed, but took care that Turenne should not see. Dorothea, passing them with pale face and downcast eyes, saw nothing, knew nothing, save that her brother was dead and Ludwig had shamed her love.

In the courtyard Turenne held her stirrup, and she gave him her hand as she stepped to the ground; and Turenne kissed it as he bared his head.

'And in life and in death I am your servant, Dorothea,' he said.

'Ah!' some one said harshly, and Turenne sprang up. It was Ludwig, and Ludwig pale with anger and spite. 'It is pleasant riding, and the wood is dark, and monsieur is willing, for you are a pretty plaything and you love the game, you ——' Turenne jumped at him and gripped his arm. There were many listening.

'Silence, beast!' he hissed in Ludwig's ear. Ludwig flung him off, crying:

'Shut yourself up, you strumpet!' and the girl, who had scarcely understood till then, winced at the word. Turenne caught Ludwig again and his fingers pressed deep into Ludwig's flesh.

'Now you will talk to me,' he said very quietly. 'You will talk to me, Prince Ludwig, all alone.' Ludwig tried to drag his arm away, but Turenne's grip was too hard. The girl stood dazed, clinging to her horse lest she should fall, staring wildly at the two men. Ludwig's spite had fooled him; she understood but half the insult he had flung at her. This was a new pain, but only a new pain, and her weary heart could feel only a little more.

'You!' cried Ludwig. 'Ay, you, you French fop ——'

'You interest me,' said Turenne; 'come, let me hear it by myself,' he looked down into Ludwig's face and led him away. 'Back to your posts, knaves,' he cried sharply, and the little crowd of listeners broke up. 'Where will you give me audience, Prince Ludwig?'

'Come in, curse you!' cried Ludwig, and flung open the door of the seneschal's room. The two men went in and Turenne shut the door carefully. He had work to do.

In the courtyard Dorothea stood still for a little while after they had gone. Then she looked round her suddenly, started to find she was alone, and walked unsteadily away.

'And now, Prince Ludwig, you have something to say,' said Turenne, flinging his cloak off on the table. But Ludwig had grown cooler.

'I only have to say this, Monsieur le Vicomte de Turenne: that it is not for this you were put here.'

'That it is not for what, Prince Ludwig?' asked Turenne softly.

'For what? Ay, you are very calm,' cried Ludwig flushing. 'I tell you I will not have that fool of a woman smirch my name!'

'Smirch — your — name!' said Turenne, slowly. 'Smirch — your — name!' and he laughed. Ludwig sprang up.

'Yes, my name! You think yourself safe because you come from France, you coward ——' and then Turenne was on his feet, and his sword flashing in Ludwig's face.

'On guard!' he said harshly. 'You have called me a coward.' He smiled grimly; he had made himself a chance. Ludwig sprang back.

'I cannot fight,' he cried. 'You are not of my rank.'

'I thank God, no,' said Turenne with a sneer;

'nevertheless I will lower myself by fighting you, Prince Ludwig.' Ludwig opened his mouth to speak, and Turenne, thrusting quickly, drove him back against the wall, and put the rapier point to his heart.

'I run you through if you cry for help!' he said, quickly. 'Draw, draw!'

Ludwig drew his sword and Turenne stepped back; and then Ludwig ran at him, crying:

'To me, to me the Prince's guard!' Turenne, jumping back, not much too soon, muttered a curse, and, parrying Ludwig twice, said:

'So, so, assassin!' and he thrust in turn again and again, for he knew the time was short. At the clash of their swords, the door flew open and Dorothea ran in wild-eyed, in frenzy:

'No, no!' she cried, running between, her arms stretched wide, 'you must not for me.'

Turenne's point dropped to the ground at once, and Ludwig, seizing the moment, lunged at him fiercely; and the blade passed through Dorothea's breast. As she fell Turenne caught her, and kneeling, laid her gently on the ground. But Ludwig did not forget himself: he wiped his sword quickly on Turenne's cloak and cried again, stamping his foot:

'The guard, the guard!'

Dorothea lay in Turenne's arms with her head on

his breast, and she sighed happily and her face was very calm. But Turenne groaned as he saw her blood flowing, and tried in vain to staunch it; she heard him, and turned her pale lovely face to his.

'No, do not be sorry,' she murmured; 'he was kind, so kind.' Turenne could not speak; and as she lay in his arms dying he kissed her.

The guard ran clattering up.

'Seize him,' cried Ludwig, angrily, pointing to Turenne; and the men, all amazed, with muttered oaths, tore him away from Dorothea. She fell back on the floor, and their captain, a big Swede, knelt by her and raised her head; and he felt about the wound. He looked up fiercely at Ludwig:

'How? how?' he cried. And Ludwig licked his lips before he answered.

'The Vicomte de Turenne asked me for an audience. Then he suddenly tried to assassinate me, pretending to grow angry because I would not agree to something he proposed. He drew upon me. I called you, captain. The Princess ran in to save me, and the Vicomte de Turenne has murdered her.'

Turenne, looking at Dorothea, waited. He meant that she should choose which of them she would, and Dorothea made her choice.

'No — he — he!' she cried faintly, raising herself on the Swede's arm and pointing to Ludwig.

Then Turenne broke away from the men who held him, sprang to the window and dashed it open, and with one leg over the sill, pointing at Ludwig with his clean sword.

'Yes, he!' he cried, and he swung himself quickly down.

Dorothea saw it and sank back smiling. She looked up into the Swede's bearded face, but his eyes were on Ludwig. Ludwig was swearing and coming angrily forward.

'Hands are wet, your Highness,' said the Swede, gruffly. Ludwig started, saw that his left hand was bloody, and changed colour. 'Wash them before you touch her, sir,' growled the Swede; and Ludwig, staring at him, turned away.

'Waldkirch, Waldkirch,' Dorothea murmured. 'Lay me at Waldkirch'; her mind was away among the beech woods and downs of Solgau. The Swede, bending over her to catch her words, bowed his head.

The guard stood puzzled about the room, some watching Dorothea, some leaning out of the window looking after Turenne. Ludwig, with his back to them, wiped his hand.

'The birds — singing — singing,' Dorothea murmured; and her eyes closed and she sighed slowly, but there was a smile on her face.

The Swede laid her down gently, and stayed for a moment kneeling by her side; then he rose and walked slowly to Ludwig:

'Her Highness is dead, sir,' he said.

'Eh?' said Ludwig, sharply. He glanced carelessly at his wife. 'Oh! the fool,' he muttered with a frown.

'Her Highness is dead, sir,' said the Swede.

'I see, curse you, I see,' cried Ludwig, and he went out.

He was very angry. A thing had happened that he had not foreseen, and his plans were coming to nought. His title to Solgau lay dead. He had thrown his trump card away. He cursed Turenne and he cursed the fool — and that was not the worst name — who had run on her death; and he could find no trick to help himself. Never, he thought, had chance fought against a man so. His schemes, he was sure, were cunning enough; no man alive could have played his game better. And then a fool, a cursed fool of a woman, must spoil all!

And Dorothea lay smiling.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD

THE lieutenant of the guard of Prince Ludwig von Lichtenstein let his feet fall heavily on the hearth.

'Swords are swords, and women are women — but, by the fiend, I say knaves are knaves!' he growled.

'Ah! 'tis the living truth, lieutenant; and what then?' said the quartermaster, setting down his glass.

'Why, swords are swords,' the lieutenant grumbled, and he kicked at the logs; 'ugh! and cowards are cowards.' He leant back and lit his pipe at the candle.

'Plague on it! tell me a lie and I'll find an answer,' cried the quartermaster.

'By the fiend, yes — and cap it! Bones of Beelzebub, man, if you had killed your wife would you be ashamed of it?'

'*Gott!* I have none, and save the trouble. What, I suppose he did kill her, and not the Frenchman! But, body o' me, would you spare the man who took your place?'

The lieutenant frowned, scratched his head, rose and kicked his chair back.

'A man kills and says so — and zounds! we know how the land lies. But a man kills and says it was Jack the Piper, and, by Abram's nurse, where are you?'

'Yes, yes, Tom,' said the quartermaster placidly. He filled his glass again. ''Tis hard on your wits, I know. But, d'ye see, when a man plays with your wife why you stab him in the back if you can.'

The lieutenant, walking heavily up and down, paused and scratched his head again.

'I'll not believe that,' he said gruffly. The quartermaster laughed. Just then the big Swedish captain came in. He flung his hat down on the table, filled a glass and emptied it without speaking.

'Well, captain, how goes it?'

'Humph! dull enough — and dry enough.' And he drank off another glass.

'So: here is Tom, will cheer you up. He's begun to believe in a woman,' and the quartermaster laughed.

'Ah!' the Swede muttered, and he looked at Tom standing stolidly by the fire. 'Albrecht, take the rounds on the east side.'

The quartermaster got up lazily and went out, and the Swede, wiping his beard, said:

'Tom!'

'Ay?'

'A cursed cowardly rogue!'

'So he is,' said Tom gruffly.

'I promised to bury her in Solgau — Waldkirch.'

'Ay, ay,' said Tom nodding, 'they all want strange things when they're dying. There was Jacob Allthringen wanted a bath.'

'*Gott!* Listen to me, man,' cried the Swede. 'I promised. I told Ludwig. He cursed me for a meddlesome fool; swore she should be buried here.'

'Well, earth is earth,' growled Tom.

'But I promised the girl,' said the Swede. Tom scratched his head.

'Foolish,' he grunted. 'Umph! And Ludwig swore at you for it? He is cursed free with his curses. D'ye know I have had near enough of Ludwig?'

'Enough? Yes!' said the Swede. 'I promised the girl, and by God I won't fail her. Will you help me take her back to Solgau?'

'Why earth is earth,' Tom grumbled. 'And what is it to her? She may as well try the ground here — oh, but there's Ludwig. Ludwig would swear . . . zounds! yes, let's make Ludwig swear!'

The Swede rose quickly.

'Come, then, have my horse and yours and a

horse litter outside the postern. Say "the orders of Prince Ludwig" to the warder.'

'Orders of Ludwig?' muttered Tom. 'Orders of Ludwig?' and he chuckled. 'Ho, ho, that's a good joke.' But he hurried away; he knew how to do what he was told.

The Swede crossed the courtyard to the bare little chapel where Dorothea's body lay. A taper burnt at head and foot, and a woman watched by it. She started at the heavy clanking footsteps and came to meet him.

'What do you here?' she cried fiercely.

'Orders of Prince Ludwig,' said the Swede.

'Prince Ludwig!' she cried. 'A pretty prince! And what would Prince Ludwig do now?'

'I come to take her away,' said the Swede, pointing at the tapers.

'To take her away? What devil's work would he have with her now?'

'I am to bury her,' said the Swede.

'Now? In the night? Alone? Where, ah, tell me where!' she cried. And the Swede, looking down at her in the dim light and seeing her tears, said slowly:

'You — you come from Solgau?'

'Yes, I came with her from Solgau. I played with her; I was her maid always. I came with her

to this hell. Tell me, tell me where you will bury her?'

'I shall bury her at Waldkirch in Solgau,' said the Swede.

'Ah! But that — that is not Ludwig!' she cried. 'That must be you.' The Swede nodded. 'You will?' she asked eagerly. 'Oh, take me with her!' He paused for a moment.

'You are little enough,' he muttered to himself. 'Come, in God's name.'

He took Dorothea's body in his arms, and, drawing his cloak round him, strode quickly to the postern gate with the woman hurrying at his side.

'Orders of Prince Ludwig,' he said sharply to the warder, and the warder shook his head at the woman.

'Shocking, shocking,' he chuckled, and the Swede went out with the dead girl in his arms. He laid her on the litter.

'Why, what's this?' growled Tom, pointing to the woman.

'She wanted to come with her mistress,' said the Swede quietly.

'Fools are fools,' Tom grunted.

So they rode, through the cold dark January night, away from Lichtenstein, bearing one of the works of its Prince.

CHAPTER XVII

THE TOYS OF GOD

TURENNE swung himself down from the castle wall to the steep crags below; and he sprang from rock to rock, judging his distance carefully, without ever a fall or a slip. He never hurried and he never faltered. For a moment he stood on a narrow ledge, shading his eyes with his hand, peering through the pale sunlight to see his men. Then he turned slowly round again, with his face to the cliff, and let himself down, over the sharp brown rock. When at last he found himself on smooth ground, he paused for a moment and looked up at the Castle of Lichtenstein high above him, and then walked quickly on the way that his men had taken.

He passed by the place where he had met Dorothea in the morning, he passed by the wood where he had ridden by her side, but he did not see them, did not think of them. His eyes were on the little cloud of dust coming quickly nearer and nearer, and his mind was thinking, not of Dorothea, but of the man who had killed her. The thud of hoofs came nearer, and then the sound broke up, and he

heard the clang and clash of steel; he could see the dancing white plumes, and then see the men rise in their stirrups as they caught sight of him. Then came a hoarse order, 'Gallop!' and in another moment they were up with him. 'Halt!' The hoofs ground into the dust, and the men lay back in their saddles.

Turenne stopped, looked at them, and did not speak.

'Orders, sir?' the lieutenant asked; and Turenne said coldly:

'We march to join his Excellency Père Joseph de Tremblay. I need a horse.'

One trooper was mounted behind another, and, with Turenne in his place, they moved away. The lieutenant, riding close on Turenne's right hand, asked:

'Something happened at the castle, sir?' with a jerk of his head backwards. Turenne looked at him coldly for a moment without speaking, then:

'The Princess Dorothea has been murdered by Prince Ludwig,' he said quietly. The grizzled old soldier, staring at Turenne's calm face, muttered:

'The Madonna dead!'

'Murdered!' said Turenne sharply. Jean Armand, still staring at him, muttered again:

'The Madonna dead!'

For some time they rode on in silence, till Armand shrugged his shoulders. and said:

'Humph! 'tis a pity, sir.'

'Is it?' said Turenne.

All through the short winter afternoon they rode on, while the grey twilight died in the west, and darkness had fallen thick before they came to the little village on the border where Père Joseph rested on his way to Solgau.

Turenne came into the Capuchin's room, and found him alone, leaning back in his chair, with his eyes on the door.

'What is it, Henri?' said the Capuchin quietly.

'Ludwig has murdered Dorothea,' said Turenne. The Capuchin, shifting his papers on the table, answered:

'I left you at Lichtenstein, Monsieur le Vicomte.' And Turenne, meeting his eyes, began to tell the story:

'I met her outside Lichtenstein this morning; she asked me to show her her brother's grave. We rode back to the castle together. I kissed her hand when I held her stirrup. Ludwig was there, and began to abuse her before the grooms and the guard. I took him away into a room alone. I meant that he should insult me and be killed. I made him draw on me, and then he called the guard. Dorothea

heard the swords and ran in. I dropped my point. Then Ludwig, thrusting at me, killed her.' And his voice was low and steady. The monk's lips moved, and Turenne heard nothing. Through the silence came the noise of horses stamping in the street. And at last Père Joseph's eyes opened, and he said slowly:

'And you — gave your word — to the Marshal of Solgau.'

Turenne drew himself up.

'I have not broken it,' he said proudly. 'Sir, I promised to care for the Princess Dorothea till she was free from Ludwig — and after. I shall keep my word.' The monk groaned.

'And you loved her, Henri?' Turenne bowed slightly. The Capuchin beckoned to him, and when he came took his hand.

'God is wiser, my son,' he said. But Turenne's hand lay in his cold and passive.

'Doubtless, God is very wise, my father,' said Turenne, with a sneer. 'But what do we know of it? We are His toys. If I had had a minute more Ludwig would have been dead, and not Dorothea. But without doubt God is wise!'

'She is happy,' said the monk. Turenne shrugged his shoulders.

'Perhaps!'

'There is no perhaps with God' . . .

'We waste time, my father,' said Turenne. 'Ludwig is still alive.' The Capuchin shook his head slowly.

'If you would think less of him, Henri, and think more of her, it would be easier.' But Turenne's frown grew darker.

'She will not come back,' said he; and the Capuchin knew that there was no answer. 'Eh! there is work still.'

'There is work,' said the Capuchin quickly; 'and there is a debt to Solgau.'

'Ay, and a debt to Lichtenstein,' cried Turenne.

'A debt to Solgau,' said the Capuchin again. Turenne drew up a chair and sat down.

'Solgau? Yes, sir; I suppose we shall help that fool who is Prince ——'

'And — that man — who is not a fool — who is Marshal of Solgau,' said the Capuchin very slowly. 'He hates us; and he keeps faith with us; and he — there is no heir to Solgau,' he said; and he looked at Turenne.

'Hates us?' said Turenne. 'Indeed he has little reason to love us.'

'And if he had a reason?' said Père Joseph; and again he looked at Turenne. But Turenne shook his head.

'I doubt he is not for sale,' said Turenne.

'Some men are not bought with money,' the Capuchin answered.

'And some men are not bought at all.'

'But some can forget — and change if there be cause,' said the Capuchin.

'I should think him less,' said Turenne with a shrug. 'Less — if he change.'

'You would,' the monk said quietly. 'But we talk of what may be.'

'Ay, and Ludwig presses,' Turenne answered.

'You — would have war?'

'What have we gained by peace with him?' said Turenne quickly.

'Yet if we confess ourselves foes?' said the monk and he looked at Turenne.

'Stab him in a corner as he stabbed his wife?' cried Turenne. 'Yet it might be surer!'

'And then — what of Solgau?' said the monk sharply. Turenne did not answer. Père Joseph's big wrinkled hand gripped the table edge: 'Solgau has kept faith with us when she had cause enough to doubt; now that Solgau must ask for justice — before God, France shall stand by her side!' He paused for a moment. 'I was going to Solgau to-morrow; there will be more to say.'

On that night three men galloped away from the

little village southwards with one despatch for Duke Bernhard of Weimar; and when he read it the soldier started and frowned. Then he smiled as he came to the end. He, too, did not love cowards; there was work to come that would be much to his taste. He was very anxious to meet Ludwig von Lichtenstein. But all that night Turenne lay sleeping quietly, and his dreams were of a man hanging in the air while the Vicomte de Turenne smiled at him.

Through the darkness Dorothea was coming back to Solgau dead.

CHAPTER XVIII

PRINCE EBERHARD IS ABSOLVED

AND so fate played with Lichtenstein and Solgau till even the Capuchin wondered at the ways of his God. Yet he did not doubt that all these things were but steps on one great staircase. He could see the top; there was the glory of France and God; but the middle was hidden. His mind went over again all that had happened, set it together now in one way now in another, and tried to guess what must follow. At last he seemed to see the future more clearly, the mist gaped a little: Ludwig had had his hour, had done his work, and was yet to have his pay. Ludwig would go. The weak old man who held rule in Solgau could be only a puppet in the hands of France. Then the strength of the two States would be at his bidding. So Père Joseph made all things work together for good.

For all this, his God was something more than a man-made creature whose divinity was his approval of Père Joseph. If Ludwig had done evil, it was the duty of men who had power and could use it to

punish him. And Père Joseph had power. Nor did his duty stop when a pleasant task was done. Solgau had been useful to him, and by his friendship, his alliance, Solgau had gained only sorrow. It would be hard to serve Solgau and to serve France at once, but he meant to do it because his God would have it done. The confidence that upheld him when even Richelieu lost heart had nothing in it of empty pride. The steadfast resolve with which he did his work did not come from carelessness of other men. If he dealt with knaves he would beat them with tools not greatly better than theirs, and for their sufferings he had no pity and no remorse. But only so far as this was he like the other men of his trade. His cry of *miserere* when he saw the death-warrant of Prince Maximilian was not forgotten as soon as said. Amid the long prayers for himself and France that he said kneeling on the bare oaken floor of the village inn there was more than one for Dorothea, and more than one cry for forgiveness because he had not saved her. He thought his power great, but he thought his duties great as well.

Prince Eberhard sat in his great gilded chair in the castle hall. It was the day on which Père Joseph had promised to come to talk of justice for the death of Prince Maximilian. The old man was

pale and worn, and his thin hands shook as they lay on the arms of his chair. In the courtyard the trumpets sounded. Père Joseph had kept his promise.

He came slowly up the hall and stood before the old man. He gave one look round the few who were in waiting, and then:

'I give your Highness good-day; I would I could give you good news.'

'Sit, sit, your Excellency,' said Prince Eberhard. 'There can be no news I care to hear. Tell me of Ludwig von Lichtenstein! You said you would help — would bring me — would give me ——'

'I have to tell your Highness that no man who serves me will spare Ludwig von Lichtenstein,' said the Capuchin. 'He has done more.'

'More?' cried the old man. 'More? Could he do more? Ah!' he started and caught at his head. 'Dorothea? Not Dorothea? Not — not — not ——'

'The Princess Dorothea has been murdered by Ludwig von Lichtenstein,' said the Capuchin. The old man, bowing himself, wrung his hands and murmured:

'Both, both! My maid, my little maid!'

All around him was rustle and the rattle of steel as men turned to one another and growled out

oaths. But the old man, shrinking into his chair, only murmured to himself:

'Both, both!'

Then the doors were flung wide, and up the middle of the hall came two big bearded men bearing between them something covered with a cloak. Before the daïs they set it down and one of them, pushing his way up to Prince Eberhard, said:

'The Princess Dorothea of Solgau was killed by Prince Ludwig. She bade me bury her at Waldkirch. Ludwig would not let me. I have brought her, Prince!' and he pointed to the cloak. The old man staggered from his chair and drew the cloak from her smiling face, and he fell on his knees and kissed her:

'My maid, my dear little maid!' he cried. 'My dear dead maid!'

There was silence all through the hall; and a faint ray of the wintry sun fell across the old man's white hair and Dorothea's calm, smiling, lovely face. Many men stood by who would have given their lives to save her, and some who would have given all they had for her love. But Prince Ludwig had killed her. The bright armour of the Princes of Solgau shone down upon her from the walls; the banners they had borne, the banners they had taken from their foes, hung over her head; all the tokens

of the might of Solgau were around her, and she lay in the midst, dead.

The old monk who had tried his craft against the wisest men of his time and won by it; who had pledged his word for her safety to the Marshal of Solgau; who had scorned Ludwig von Lichtenstein for a knave and a fool, stood looking at the woman whom his craft and his word and his scorn had done nothing to save. She lay there murdered by his foe.

Turenne, in whose care she had been, stood by and saw her again. The man who was to be the greatest captain of the day was given one woman to care for, the woman whom he loved. He saw her husband kill her. Now she lay by him, dead.

The nobles of Solgau, the nobles of France who feared no man on earth, and would have asked no better cause to fight for than this, silently watched Prince Eberhard kneeling while his white hair mingled with the golden hair of the dead girl, who was still to him a maid. They had not stayed her death.

But in death Dorothea lay smiling.

And the old man knelt by her saying nothing now, and still the sunlight fell on them and crowned her golden hair. There was nothing that any man dared say to him, nothing that any man could do for him,

and they knew it and did not look at one another; they felt that his daughter was dead.

At last Père Joseph moved slowly to Prince Eberhard and touched him on the shoulder.

'Your Highness is weary,' he said gently. But the old man did not move. Père Joseph bent down and looked at his face; then he too fell on his knees by Prince Eberhard and gently lifted his head. With the old man lying in his arm he made the sign of the cross on the thin wrinkled forehead.

'*Absolvo te!*' he said quietly: he thought Prince Eberhard had made confession.

Others ran forward to look; but the monk laid Prince Eberhard gently down by his daughter's side, and kneeling still he murmured:

'*Venite subventuri animae omnes sancti Dei, obviam ite angeli Dei, accipite animam et perducite nunc ad Dominum ejus*'; then slowly he rose from his knees.

'The Prince of Solgau is — happy,' he said; he looked round the little throng and saw the Baron von Rosenberg.

'Lord Chamberlain of Solgau! To any aid that France can give Solgau has a right,' he said.

'He is dead!' muttered the Baron von Rosenberg.

The castle bell began to toll, and in the hall and

the courtyard little knots of men gathered, talking of the vengeance Solgau must have upon Ludwig von Lichtenstein; and wild things were said and wild oaths sworn while the deep boom of the bell sounded above all.

Dorothea and her father were laid in state in the chapel and the constable of the castle stood by them on guard; but all alone, in a bare little room, the woman who had fled from Lichtenstein with the Swede, lay weeping. She was not noble enough to watch beside a princess.

CHAPTER XIX

THE GLOVE OF LORMONT

PÈRE JOSEPH sat alone on the morning of the next day, and his head rested on his hand as he sat looking into the fire. Lormont came in; but the monk did not hear him and still sat with his lips a little parted and his eyes wide open staring at the fire.

'I came, sir, because I was sent for,' said Lormont thoughtfully.

Père Joseph turned.

'Yes, sit down, Lormont.' Lormont moved a chair lazily and sat in it. 'You have been with Turenne?'

'I have been with the man who was Turenne, sir,' said Lormont slowly.

'Did he speak to you of her?'

'No; he spoke to me of him,' said Lormont, and he paused. 'I am, I believe, sorry for the Princess Dorothea; but I think I am more sorry for Henri. I do not like to see my friend turned to a living sword.'

'He loved her much,' said the Capuchin.

Oh, loved her, yes,' cried Lormont quickly. 'But she would not have him be hangman in his dreams.' The Capuchin nodded and sighed:

'Yet he will work, he will work very well.'

'Doubtless — when our very dear friend, Ludwig, is dead,' said Lormont. The monk did not answer. 'And — ah! — is he our very dear friend, sir?' he asked. The monk raised his eyes slowly.

'You have never trusted Ludwig von Lichtenstein.' Lormont shook his head with a lazy smile:

'Not even when you called him Prince Ludwig, sir,' he answered.

'His power is still great, Lormont,' said the Capuchin.

'Indeed, he would be a dangerous foe,' said Lormont. He too could play this game. 'And a faithful friend he has been to France; he paused for a moment, looking at Père Joseph, 'and to Solgau, sir,' he said very softly.

'You have studied the feelings of Solgau, Lormont?' asked Père Joseph, and there was a little light in his eye.

'It was my duty, sir,' said Lormont with a bow.

'You have talked with the men — ah! — and the women, Lormont?'

'As the minister of France, sir.'

'So you have seen much of the Baron von Rosenberg?'

'I have endeavoured to learn his sentiments, sir.'

'Ah!' said the Capuchin. 'Only — as the minister of France?'

'I have learnt from you, sir, that a minister has many duties,' said Lormont placidly.

'You needed no instruction in some, Lormont.'

'You flatter me, sir. Had you only been in my place ——!' and he sighed and shook his head.

'Could I have done more?' said Père Joseph, and his lips twitched.

'Oh, your will would have been no better, sir. But — your experience ——' and he looked doubtfully at the monk.

'So you would rather I had been at Solgau instead?'

'Indeed, sir, you put me here; and, of course, it was for the best,' said Lormont, bowing to hide his face.

'It was a difficult position,' said the Capuchin thoughtfully.

'Difficulties grow less when — when you are very close to them, sir,' said Lormont. 'You — ah, embrace them, and all is clear.' The Capuchin looked at him quickly for a moment, then bent his head and smiled behind his hand.

'And if France should embrace Lichtenstein, what would they say then in Solgau, Lormont — the men and — the lady?'

Lormont started, then sat silent a long time trying to read the Capuchin's eyes, and as he watched his face grew grave and at last he said:

'I think they would say this, sir: France brought Solgau into alliance with Lichtenstein. France killed a Prince of Solgau to please Ludwig, and let Ludwig kill a Princess. And they would say — it is no doubt unkind of them, but they would say it, these hard men of Solgau: France is a sham and a cheat; let us give France her quittance and deal alone with Ludwig von Lichtenstein!' No sign showed on the Capuchin's face.

'That is what the men would say, Lormont — and the lady?' he asked. Then Lormont rose, and drew himself up and said, looking down at the monk:

'My lady would say, sir, what I say for her now: France has brought sorrow to Solgau. Ay! France has betrayed Solgau, and now if France chooses to stand by a murderer because it pays her, then there is no room under the lilies for a man who brings his honour with him.' His voice had fallen low.

'And so you will follow a girl?' said the Capuchin.

'I shall follow my honour, sir,' said Lormont, and he bowed.

'And where will that lead you?' the Capuchin asked.

'Not — back — to France, sir,' said Lormont, and his voice was unsteady. 'I am sorry you give me the choice.'

And Père Joseph, tapping with his fingers on the table and looking at Lormont, said slowly:

'Your honour will take you back to Ludwig von Lichtenstein now.'

Then Lormont sighed and sat down again.

'Indeed, sir, I am doubtless a mouse; may I be killed and rest?' but the Capuchin went on without heeding him:

'And you will say to Ludwig von Lichtenstein all that might come from the Lady Amaryllis.'

'But I think I will say more,' Lormont murmured.

'You will renounce alliance with him.'

'Indeed I think she would,' Lormont murmured.

'And you will tell him — but perhaps you will tell him enough, Lormont.'

'I seldom say too little, sir,' said Lormont. 'And yet — indeed I am not sure — but perhaps I should ask your pardon,' and he looked doubtfully at Père Joseph.

'You are too modest, Lormont,' said Père Joseph, and he laughed.

'Now that is what my lady said, sir,' Lormont answered.

'No doubt she has perceived it, and yet — indeed I am not sure — but perhaps I should ask her pardon,' said the Capuchin, looking up at the ceiling.

'But it was praise, sir,' Lormont murmured. 'For if she can perceive my modesty she is indeed the most gifted of women.' He paused and bowed with a flourish: 'And so she is, sir,' said he.

'The lady of the Comte de Lormont will not lack praise; and she will not need it,' said the Capuchin with a smile. 'Well, Lormont, I go to the Baron von Rosenberg, and perhaps I may see his daughter.'

'You are fortunate, sir,' said Lormont; 'and so am I. I will deal faithfully with Ludwig von Lichtenstein,' and he bowed and went out.

In the courtyard he met the Baron von Rosenberg, and the Baron nodded and said:

'A bad day, Comte de Lormont.' Lormont smoothing his moustache answered:

'A very bad day, Baron, for Ludwig von Lichtenstein,' but the Baron von Rosenberg frowned at him. 'We have given you nothing yet but losses,' said Lormont quickly, 'but we will give you

vengeance. I go to let Ludwig down one step nearer hell. Père Joseph waits on you, Baron,' and he bowed and turned away. But the Baron caught his sleeve:

'What, you'll give him up?' he cried.

'Why the parting is very hard, Baron; Ludwig is so dear a friend of ours; but France stands for Solgau.' The Baron's mouth fell open and Lormont looking round him murmured:

'The guard, my dear lieutenant, where is my guard?'

'Coming, sir!' said the lieutenant gruffly.

'Coming! coming!' said Lormont. 'My friend, we keep Ludwig waiting.'

'And you hold by us?' said the Baron.

'Why, we should prefer it, Baron; but Père Joseph is waiting — ah! are we ready? — and so is Ludwig, Baron. I go to make our adieux to him'; he swung himself to the saddle. 'Will you — make mine?' he said more quietly, and the Baron nodded and smiled at him grimly. For he knew when a man was a man.

The Comte de Lormont settled his cloak carefully round him and rode away. They had not gone far before he called the lieutenant to his side.

'Ah! this is a day's march, lieutenant?'

'Yes, sir. Be a long day for you, sir,' said the

lieutenant gruffly, and he looked at Lormont with a fatherly smile. Lormont sighed.

'Will it, my friend? Let us go a little faster,' he said.

And they pushed on and on till the tough old troopers looked with much respect at the gay slim figure riding easily beside them. The Comte de Lormont was lazy when there was time for laziness.

'Do it well, sir,' said the lieutenant, towards afternoon.

'And, indeed, my dear lieutenant, I intend to do it well,' said Lormont, and the lieutenant chuckled.

'Horses be rather tired, sir,' he said in a few moments.

'And, indeed, so shall I,' said Lormont.

'D'ye think he will try to follow us, sir?'

'My very dear friend, are you afraid of Ludwig von Lichtenstein?' said Lormont quietly. The lieutenant swore. 'Be calm, my friend,' said Lormont, patting his shoulder, 'you will be quite safe, you are neither a boy nor a woman.'

'Hein! you do talk, sir, you do talk!' growled the lieutenant with another chuckle as he perceived slowly a joke.

'So they tell me,' said Lormont thoughtfully. 'I believe it is habit.' But this was beyond the

lieutenant, and Lormont sighed and looked at his muddy boots.

It was near the end of the short January afternoon when they came to the Castle of Lichtenstein; Lormont halted his men a little way from the walls and said:

'Now, lieutenant, if you will go nearer and inform that worthy man who is waving two very long arms at us so frantically — ah! — inform him that the Comte de Lormont has a message from Père Joseph de Tremblay for His Satanic Highness Prince Ludwig I shall be infinitely obliged.' The lieutenant saluted and turned his horse. 'Ah! lieutenant — His Serene Highness!' said Lormont.

In a few minutes the lieutenant came back.

'He says Ludwig is waiting for you in the audience hall, sir.'

'Ah! that is unworthy of Ludwig,' said Lormont slowly. 'The Spider's game is so venerable. Also I do not climb as well as Henri. Lieutenant, will you tell our friend of the arms that the Comte de Lormont being — ah! yes — being far too foully clad to appear in the audience hall would hold himself deeper in Prince Ludwig's debt if Prince Ludwig would talk with him from the drawbridge?'

'Well, but — but he'll think you a fool, sir?'

'Precisely, my dear friend,' said Lormont.

Ludwig came out at last on to the drawbridge with his guards about him, and Lormont galloped up alone to meet him.

'Ah, my dear Comte,' cried Ludwig with a smile. 'You do your dress dishonour. And in any dress you would be welcome at Lichtenstein.' Lormont bowed.

'But a guest at Lichtenstein must be careful of himself,' said he.

'My dear Comte, we do not care for dress; my guests are guests in rags or in velvet.'

'In life and in death,' murmured Lormont. Ludwig started.

'And I have much to say that I would have you tell Père Joseph. How is my dear father?' Lormont shook his head.

'Fools trouble him,' said he.

'Ah! he is failing?' cried Ludwig and his face was more solemn than his voice.

'He lives only to take away their trouble from Lichtenstein and Solgau,' said Lormont slowly. Ludwig frowned.

'And you had a message for me, my dear Comte?' he asked eagerly.

'Ah, yes,' said Lormont. 'Yes, I am to thank you for your goodness in preserving for your own use Monsieur le Vicomte de Turenne.' Ludwig

started, changed colour, tried to speak and stammered.

'The — the — the —' and Lormont laughed. 'The Vicomte de Turenne is my bitterest enemy; he has killed my wife.'

'And some of that is really true,' murmured Lormont.

'He killed my wife, sir!' cried Ludwig, stamping his foot.

'Beyond doubt it was a kindness to her.'

'I ask justice of France on the murderer.'

'Before God, you shall have it!' said Lormont very quietly.

'You have only heard the tale of the murderer.'

'And the tale of the murdered.'

'By God! I accuse him, Henri de Turenne, of murder in my own castle. I would have you tell that to Père Joseph.'

'She accused you,' said Lormont, and when Ludwig did not answer at once he went on. 'But doubtless she was wrong. What greater folly could be than for her husband to murder the heiress of Solgau? The heir — oh that we understood — though the way was the way of a fool — but the heiress when she was his own wife! — Why, that would be the work of the longest-eared ass in Europe. Oh, doubtless she was wrong!'

'Yes, sir,' said Ludwig, with a very white face, and his voice quavered. 'It could not have been I; and so — and so — I would have you ask Père Joseph for justice on Henri de Turenne.'

'The Vicomte de Turenne is anxious to meet you face to face,' said Lormont thoughtfully. 'And why — if you are anxious to meet him — indeed we shall all be pleased.'

'To meet me — how?' cried Ludwig.

'Yes, I thought you would object,' said Lormont. 'The Vicomte de Turenne has a long arm, and swords are sharp, and breasts are soft, are they not?'

'I ask for justice,' cried Ludwig. 'Will France do justice for me on Henri de Turenne?'

'The Vicomte de Turenne was giving you justice, and I have heard that you did not like it; and France — oh, France will give you justice yet!'

Then Ludwig, starting back, cried:

'Was this your message?' And Lormont, sneering at him, said quickly:

'Be patient, be patient; since you have proved so well that only a clumsy fool would rob himself of what he had done murder to win — and we know that only a knave would murder his wife, and only a coward refuses to fight — then I bid you adieu, for the wickedest fool and the stupidest knave that

ever came out of hell!' He reined his horse quickly back from the drawbridge, and Ludwig, white with passion, screamed:

'Go, you scoundrel, go!' Lormont, sitting easily with his hand on his hip, went quietly on:

'For France, I say: you are no ally of hers, and the devil give you heart to fight her! And for myself——' his right hand came suddenly out from his cloak, and he dashed a glove in Prince Ludwig's face. 'Take heart, take heart; pick it up, coward!'

But Ludwig, staggering back a step, cried to the guard:

'Fire, curse you, fire!'

'A fool's fools!' cried Lormont, with a wave of his hand to them; and he turned and galloped down the hill with the bullets singing about him.

With an angry shout his guard spurred forward to meet him, spreading wide to cover him from the musketeers on the drawbridge. Lormont, with the reins in his right hand, checked his horse.

'Turn!' he cried. 'Let us give him no more murders to boast of.' And the troopers, with oaths and venomous looks at the castle, formed again and followed him. The lieutenant, riding up, growled angrily:

'Hit, sir?'

'Why, I believe I am,' said Lormont, looking down at his left arm. He sighed.

'Bad, sir?' asked the lieutenant anxiously. Lormont sighed again.

'And it was a very pretty glove,' said he.

'Better let me look, sir,' said the lieutenant. Lormont stopped and held out his arm, and while the lieutenant pushed back the sleeve and bound up the wound, Lormont drew off the left glove carefully and looked at it, turning it over in his hand.

'She has charming taste,' he murmured, and sighed again.

CHAPTER XX

THE STORY OF DUKE BERNHARD

ALL these things were done while Karl of Erbach and Jock Elliott were on their way to Duke Bernhard. But Père Joseph's galloping couriers started later and yet outran them easily, so that when the two men rode into Bernhard's camp on the fourth day since they left Solgau they found a smaller army, for the Lichtensteiners had been sent back to Lichtenstein. Bernhard, watching their slovenly, ill-ordered march, turned to his Camp Marshal.

'Zwicka, Zwicka, what faith we keep with the rat in Lichtenstein!'

'Better than he deserves, Duke Bernhard,' growled the Marshal.

'Ah, my Zwicka, I would rather fight against those men than with them; and so I will be honest before God and man,' said Duke Bernhard, and he lay back in his saddle and laughed. '*Gott!* they march like drunken crabs,' he cried, watching the dark Lichtenstein colours zigzag across the plain. 'What would you say to your men, Zwicka, if they served you like that?'

'Say, sir?' spluttered Zwicka. 'Beelzebub's fiends, sir! my men, sir? I should say, you ——'

'Hush, hush, my Zwicka; consider our purity,' said Duke Bernhard, and he chuckled; but Zwicka under his breath was elaborating some comprehensive phrases. Bernhard turned away and rode through his camp, dropping rough jokes among the men as he passed, but never missing anything that ought to be seen. He was almost up to the outposts when he saw the two big men trotting quickly towards the camp. They were challenged by a sentry and stopped. Duke Bernhard cantered forward.

'What? Karl?' he cried. 'Let them pass, man!'

'They don't know the word, please your Highness,' said the man.

'Damn the word; nor do I,' cried Bernhard, 'let them pass!' But the sentry without stopping his musket said stolidly:

'The word is Weimar, sir. Now you can give it me.' And Bernhard chuckled.

'*Gott!* I am less than my word. Eh, Karl, but how is this? What have you done with your men?'

'Sent them to hold Schwartzsee,' said Karl. Then all trace of his laugh faded from Bernhard's face.

'Schwartzsee?' he said, tugging his moustache.

'Castle? Ay, ay, our first point,' and he looked at Karl, nodding approval. 'But — eh! what!' He caught Karl's cloak, pulled it aside, and saw the boy. 'Oh, Karl, Karl, and you never told us!' and he chuckled. 'Well, well, it's a sad world: never have thought it of you, Karl. And did you make a fool of her or did she make a fool of you?'

'I found the child,' said Karl shortly.

'Yes; one always does,' said Bernhard. 'They bring 'em to you, and you say bo! and it cries, and she laughs and cries too — and *Gott!* for all the plague I believe you like her the better!'

'He is not mine,' said Karl gravely: this was very little to his taste.

'Oh, she made a fool of you!' cried Bernhard. 'Well, he hasn't much of your mastiff jowl. What have you done with her?'

Karl, changing to French that the child should not understand, said:

'Buried her.'

'What?' cried Bernhard. 'You, Karl?'

'I found the child in a cottage on the Solgau border. His mother had been murdered by Pappenheimers ——' Bernhard who had grown serious suddenly, cried:

'Ah, Ludwig's Pappenheimers!'

'What, you knew?' cried Karl. 'I only found

it out then. One of them had the Lichtenstein colours. How did you know?'

'I guessed,' said Bernhard. 'What a fool the man is!'

'He does harm enough,' Karl said grimly.

'That is why,' said Duke Bernhard; and seeing Karl stare at him he laid his hand on Karl's shoulder: 'That is why,' he repeated; 'and you have more to hear, Karl. I suppose you have come straight from Solgau; is there news?'

'You knew Max was murdered?' said Karl.

'Yes, I thought I had news, Karl,' said Duke Bernhard. 'Come to my tent.'

At the door as they dismounted the child looked up in Karl's face.

'Please, shall I have supper, sir?' and Bernhard cried over his shoulder:

'Oh, bring him in, Karl!' and he called for a meal.

The tent was bare enough; a thick dark mat lay on the ground, there was one bare table, one littered with papers, and a few rough wooden chairs were standing near them. Bernhard strode across to the papers.

'So he really is not yours after all,' he said, looking over them with his back to Karl. The child stood holding Karl's hand, looking timidly around

him. 'Quite sad, Karl. It would have been such a relief to pick a hole in you. I suppose I shall have a joke against you, some day.' A servant came in with a tray. 'There, fall to, Karl; and let the child colour his cheeks. I doubt you don't understand children, Karl. No experience, eh? God help them, they'll have a hard time of it.' He turned with a paper in his hand. 'Such a father to live up to — and,' he paused and went on more slowly, 'such a name to bear. I am not always jesting, Karl.'

'You said you had news.'

'Eh? Yes; oh, the child isn't eating. Come here, Humpty-Dumpty,' he drew a chair up to the table and took the child on his knee. Over the child's head he held out a paper to Karl. 'There's some of it: quite interesting. Now, Hop o' my Thumb, will you have some of the boar's head or the pasty?'

'I — I don't know, sir,' said the child timidly.

'Well, we stole the boar from a very grisly ogre, so perhaps he is gristly too; but the fairies gave us the venison, so I should say have some pasty.'

'Oh yes, sir,' cried the child eagerly, looking up and smiling at him. 'Were they the white fairies?'

'Oh, they were the exceedingly white fairies; they wash in the moonbeams — eh, what, Karl?'

'Where did you get this?' Karl had said sharply. For what he had read was:

'Most August and High-born Prince, — I am commanded to do myself the honour of informing you that if the Providence of God shall in due time add Solgau to the rest of your Highness's cares, according to the rights of Her Highness who is now your wife, His Sacred Majesty the Emperor will support your Highness in all well-doing. — And I am the humblest of your Highness's servants,

'GALEAZZO.'

'To the Most August, &c., &c., Prince Ludwig von Lichtenstein.'

'That? Oh, that came from the fairies too. Six fairies in buff coats caught the amiable Galeazzo's couriers in the forest. Good reading, isn't it? Pretty turn for phrase Galeazzo has. Galeazzo and Ludwig in all well-doing! God bless all saints! "Her Highness who is now your wife ——" I wonder, why he put it that way?'

'Does the Capuchin know this?' said Karl sharply.

Bernhard thought for a moment.

'He will know it to-night,' said he. 'Have some more, Hop o' my Thumb; try the pudding, it's a very sweet pudding; see, all pink inside. Yes, and I dare swear he guessed it before.' He turned his head and looked at Karl. '*Gott!* we knew Lichten-

stein too well to trust him, but if he helped us to you, Karl ——' and he chuckled.

'You cannot expect us to laugh with you,' said Karl.

'True enough,' said Bernhard more seriously. 'There is little reason why you should trust us, and only your honour to bid you keep faith with us. What the Capuchin may say, may have said, his holiness knows; but I say — when I have fallen on Galeazzo and that rat in Lichtenstein is trapped, Solgau shall not fare ill for all that is past and gone. Well, Hop o' my Thumb, is the pudding good?'

'And this is why Weissberg fell,' said Karl. Bernhard nodded, and the child said:

'Very good; please, sir.'

'Quite the best of puddings, little man?'

'Yes, sir. It is — nearly — as good as baked apples,' said the child thoughtfully nodding his head.

'Oh, alas, for the fame of the cook!' cried Bernhard, and he chuckled. 'Orderly!'

'Yes, sir?' said the man coming quickly in and saluting.

'Bake an apple!'

'Sir?' stammered the orderly.

'Bake an apple!' said Bernhard sharply. The orderly saluted and turned. 'And — orderly!'

'Sir?'

'Bake it well!'

'Well, you must wait for that, little man,' said Bernhard. 'And what shall we do now?' The child looked up into his smiling face and nestled against him.

'Tell me a story, sir,' he whispered.

'Tell you a story?' said Bernhard slowly. 'Yes, let me talk while you eat, Karl. I have a story to tell.' And then in French, 'His mother was murdered, you said?' Karl nodded, and Bernhard thought for a moment. 'Well, I can tell it.' Karl looked up from his plate sharply, but Bernhard settled the child more easily on his knee and began to speak without a glance for Karl.

'Once upon a time, Humpty-Dumpty, there was a very pretty little white fawn, so pretty that every one knew the fairies must have brought her straight down from heaven. And for a long time the fairies watched over her and gave her all that the loveliest fawn could want. And because she had come down to them from heaven they called her Dorothea.' Then Karl drank a great draught of wine and stared at him; and the child said softly:

'Pretty name.'

'And because she was so good,' said Duke Bernhard, 'they promised her a golden crown — a crown that her little dead brother fawn would have had;

they were very strong fairies. But there was a bad man who pretended to be very fond of the fawn. One day he set his own dogs at her, and when she was very frightened he came and drove them away, and she didn't know they were his dogs, so she loved him very much because she thought he was very kind to her. She loved him so very much that when he asked her to come and live with him she was very glad, and she didn't mind leaving her fairies at all.' He paused and looked quickly at Karl.

'Go on, man,' muttered Karl.

'So she went to him, and perhaps because she was very pretty he may have been good to her at first, but what he really wanted was the golden crown the fairies had promised her. And so when he had had her only a very little while he began to grow unkind to her. I expect he beat her.'

'Did he hurt her?' said the child quickly.

'I think he hurt her very much,' said Duke Bernhard. 'But there was a big strong man there whom the fairies had sent to see that their fawn was safe. And he told the bad man to stop. But the bad man didn't stop; so the man the fairies had sent began to fight him. The bad man didn't want to fight, he was afraid; but the strong man made him. Then when they were fighting the pretty white fawn ran up to stop them, because she could not bear that they

should hurt one another for her sake. And the strong man stopped fighting; but the bad man went on, and he ran his sword through the little white fawn and she died. So the bad man lost the fawn's golden crown, and the little white fawn went back to heaven.'

Karl, with his hands clenched, cried:

'Is this true? Ludwig killed her?' and Bernhard nodded. For a moment there was silence, and then Karl said between his teeth:

'God grant I may meet him!'

'But if I meet him first——' said Duke Bernhard, and he smiled.

'Is that the end of the story, sir?' the child asked.

'You will hear the end some day,' said Duke Bernhard; and then in French:

'You take it quietly, Karl.'

'Quietly?' Karl cried. 'Is there any use in words? The Capuchin comes to Solgau, drags us into the war — to serve himself. Marries Dorothea to Ludwig — to serve himself. Max is murdered by Ludwig and the Frenchmen, and now Dorothea is murdered too. I have enough to say, Duke Bernhard, but what is gained by saying it? I shall keep faith with France, for all the little cause I have to love her, if France will give us justice; and if not

— then, Duke Bernhard, we will strike for our own cause.'

'And if France does give you justice, what then, Karl?'

'That is for Prince Eberhard to answer,' said Karl. But Prince Eberhard was dead by his daughter's side.

'What would you answer?' Bernhard asked carelessly.

Karl paused and looked him between the eyes:

'Am I speaking to the general of France or my friend?' said he.

'What would you answer to the first?' said Bernhard.

'I would say that I had had from France more than I ever thought to get,' Karl said quietly.

'You would say no more than that?'

'I do not use many words,' said Karl.

'*Gott!* but you use them well,' said Bernhard, and he chuckled. 'If France gives you justice you would still be her foe?'

'Have I been unfaithful to France?'

'So: you will say nothing. I will not ask you to tell me as your friend — because I prefer to be your friend. But I'll tell you this, Karl, France has broken with Lichtenstein. I packed the pigs out of camp to-day; and I have the clearest of orders from

His Holiness for Ludwig's head. And, *Gott!* he shall have it.'

'That is well,' said Karl with a heavy sigh.

Bernhard stretched his hand across the table and took Karl's.

'You hate the war, Karl: and the war is life to me, but I'll not say you are wrong. If I had a state like Solgau to care for — well, I have not. You hate France for dragging you into it; and I'll not say you are wrong there. But if you hate the Capuchin — Bernhard is speaking, not the Duke of Weimar — if you hate the Capuchin you are wrong.'

'Have I any reason to love him?' said Karl coldly.

'He would do more for you than you would for him,' said Bernhard.

'Let him do me justice.'

'He does — and more,' said Bernhard.

The apple came in and Bernhard gave it to the child and set him down. He brought a chair and sat beside Karl.

'When I used to know you in Solgau, soul of Gustavus! you were not too tender, but now you're turned into granite. We broke your work in Solgau, I know; but some day you will have peace again. And I — well for all I want your men

badly enough, Bernhard of Weimar can work alone — I give you my word I will do all I can to bring you peace soon, if that is all.' Karl did not answer, and his face was very stern.

'No: that is not all, Bernhard,' he said at last. He looked into his friend's eyes. 'They don't trust me in Solgau now. I have a name to make again,' he laughed; 'a name! I have to prove that I am not a coward.'

'Pho! what do a few fools matter?' cried Bernhard.

'She is not a fool,' said Karl quietly.

'What! you care for a girl?' Karl looked at him without speaking. In the silence the child looked up at them and said:

'Please what did the fairies do, sir?' Bernhard turned quickly.

'The fairies — there is a fairy glen on the hills near the black lake and there they waited for him, and they caught him, and they flung him in with a stone about his neck.'

'I am glad, sir,' said the child.

CHAPTER XXI

AN EMBASSY TO AMARYLLIS

THE Comte de Lormont was back at Solgau and his wounded arm lay in a sling of flowered silk. A basin and a spoon were on the table before him. The Comte de Lormont bent forward and sniffed at it delicately.

'That, I believe, is broth,' he said aloud. 'I am not familiar with it — ah, Pierre, is this — broth?'

'Chicken broth, Monsieur le Vicomte, as the surgeon ordered.'

'Take it to hell, Pierre; they might perhaps drink it there. Also it will be ready for the surgeon. Pass me the little dark book. Thank you.

'But Monsieur le Vicomte must take food,' said the man anxiously.

'I believe you are right, Pierre: and so I have dined.'

'Ah, monsieur,' cried the man, 'but the surgeon said ——'

'Doubtless, Pierre, he said a great deal. I should not trouble to remember it.'

Pierre went out dolefully, and Lormont left

alone began to turn over the pages of the little dark book.

'It was very foolish of this good man to write in Latin. I suppose he knew no better. Ah, here it is: *Formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas.* Now that was most impertinent of Tityrus. But I believe the good man is right: 'thou dost teach the woods to whisper, "fair Amaryllis." I heard the woods whisper last year. It was Amaryllis they said; I believe I failed to observe it. *Formosam resonare* — come in, Pierre; — *doces Amaryllida silvas.*'

'Do not let me interrupt your studies, Lormont,' said the Capuchin.

Lormont looked up, rose and bowed.

'Virgil is a delightful author, sir,' said he. 'I can sometimes translate him.'

'Pray sit, Lormont. His epithets are well chosen.'

'We are all honoured by your approval, sir.'

'Does your arm give you pain?'

'It allows me, sir, to display without ostentation a most charming piece of silk,' said Lormont. He smoothed the sling gently. 'This attracted many eyes at dinner.'

'You are sure it was the silk, Lormont?'

'I have it on the best of all words — which is,

of course, your own — that I am modest,' said Lormont. But the Capuchin said more seriously:

'The risk was not worth running, Lormont.'

'Oh, I ask your pardon, sir,' cried Lormont; 'if you had only seen Ludwig — he was as green as his eyes, and then white and red and purple — all in one happy minute. Indeed, it was quite worth running. And, my father, consider the soul of the poor sinner! Is it not well that some one should deal with him faithfully?' and Lormont stopped to yawn. 'Ah! just as I did.'

'But you are more useful alive,' said the Capuchin.

'You flatter me, sir.'

'Both to me and to the Lady Amaryllis, Lormont.'

'I believe it; and yet it puzzles me. But beyond doubt worship is useful to the gods.'

'And — they deserve it, Lormont,' said the Capuchin, and he smiled in his beard. 'Perhaps she requites it also. But I trespass; I have been with the High Council of Solgau, Lormont.' Lormont sighed.

'I condole with you, sir. Do not let me keep you from your bed.'

'We have been talking of the State; there is no heir,' said the Capuchin.

'The High Council are probably talking still.'

'They have come to no decision.'

'I am told they never do,' said Lormont. 'But you have, sir?' and he looked at the Capuchin.

'One man was spoken of — by the Baron von Rosenberg.' Lormont sat up in his chair.

'The Count of Erbach,' said he, and the Capuchin nodded. 'And they said, sir?'

'What would you say, Lormont?' and for once Lormont paused before he answered.

'I should say, sir, that it would be very well for Solgau.'

'And for France?' the Capuchin asked slowly; and Lormont paused again.

'I believe he is not a fool, sir; and I doubt he would give us no more than our due. But I think he would not forget to give us that.'

'So that if our help made him Prince in Solgau ——?' the Capuchin asked, slowly again; and he looked now for a long time at Lormont while Lormont sat silent.

'Well; it is a good price, sir,' said Lormont at last. 'He would need our help?'

'The High Council think him a coward — or a fool — or a traitor — or all these things,' said the Capuchin.

'The dear good Council,' murmured Lormont.

'Will you go to the Count of Erbach, and tell him ——' said the Capuchin.

'I will go and tell him our bid, sir,' said Lormont; and the Capuchin moved a little in his chair.

'I believe it is a fair offer,' said he.

'We make him prince; he makes himself our friend; oh, it is a fair price,' said Lormont, and he paused, 'for a thing of some value, sir.'

'You would call it a price?' said the Capuchin slowly.

'I call things by their names sometimes,' Lormont answered touching his moustache. 'It is when I desire to do good,' and he let his eyes fall on the Capuchin; but the Capuchin only said:

'You will make this offer, Lormont,' and Lormont bowed. 'I think it is generous.'

'At least — we can bid — no higher,' said Lormont and paused again before he asked: 'Shall I go to-night?'

'Will your arm let you travel so soon?' said the Capuchin.

'My arm,' said Lormont doubtfully, looking down at it, 'my arm would be much happier if I stayed till the morning.'

'I wish you would spare yourself more,' said the Capuchin rather gloomily; but he looked at Lormont and saw a whimsical smile. 'Ah! —

you meant, of course, your wounded arm?' he said quickly.

'Faith, sir, one had the delight of suffering in a good cause. Would you grudge the other the pleasure of working in a better?'

'Doubtless I keep her waiting, Lormont,' said the Capuchin, and he rose. 'We always jest, Lormont, and I think you would have it so; but take plain speech plainly for once — one of you is to be envied, and I do not know which.'

'And that is most plain, sir,' Lormont murmured. 'I never thank you, my father; if I once began it would be tedious.'

And the Capuchin smiling said:

'She waits, Lormont.'

'Then God help me!' cried Lormont, and he ran out.

Twilight was falling thick as he came into the western gallery of the castle, and away in an alcove he saw a touch of light where Amaryllis stood. She looked all round her.

'Oh! . . . I wonder if he is gone?' she said aloud.

Then the Comte de Lormont sighed loudly and sat down as if he had not seen her. Amaryllis heard him, and whether she saw him or not she said quite loudly:

'I shall never come again!' and she walked quickly away. And the Comte de Lormont sighed again. But Amaryllis went on; and the further she went the slower she walked.

'She has beyond doubt forgotten that there is no way out,' said the Comte de Lormont thoughtfully. Amaryllis turned quickly, and a cold voice far away in the twilight said:

'Will you be kind enough to leave the gallery, monsieur?'

'Monsieur?' murmured Lormont. 'Monsieur? I do not know him. Monsieur! reveal yourself!' he cried; and he came very quickly to Amaryllis. 'There is here no monsieur, my lady,' he said; 'my lady Brown-eyes,' and he took her hand.

'I have told you to go once, monsieur,' said Amaryllis, pulling her hand away. 'And my hand is my own, monsieur,' and she put it behind her. Lormont bowed:

'You have said it, mademoiselle,' said he, and he turned away. But as he walked back down the gallery a soft voice said wistfully:

'But you did come late.' Lormont was back at her side.

'Indeed I was ashamed to come before, Amaryllis,' said he; and now the hand came to his of its own will. Lormont kissed it, and holding it still

high: 'I have lost one of your gloves,' he said dolefully.

'Oh! And I worked them myself!' cried Amaryllis. 'Indeed I wonder that you dare tell me.' But she did not take away her hand, and Lormont led her to the seat in the alcove, and they sat down together.

'And I threw it away, too,' said Lormont sadly, and he shook his head.

'I do think you need not have been careless,' said Amaryllis tearfully. 'Oh, wait till I give you something else, monsieur!' and she tossed her head and drew away from him.

'Yes, I threw it in Ludwig's face,' said Lormont carelessly. 'Pearls before swine; he would not even pick it up. And he liked it so ill that he shot at me for it.'

'Ah! does it hurt, Léon?' cried Amaryllis.

'Why, the left must be idler than ever. But the right, it can do its work still, Peach-blossom! May it work and be happy?'

'I cannot have you be idle,' said Amaryllis; and as his right arm fell round her waist she came very close to him, and the dying light fell across the drooping curves of her neck where the dark dress hid it. 'And you use my gifts very well.' Lormont kissed her.

'I will use one of them well,' said he, and he kissed her again. She blushed and smiled:

'You will throw me away, too?'

'Now that is a challenge,' said Lormont, and he bent to kiss her again, but she hid her face. 'And I cannot take it up. I have only one hand.' He looked at the golden brown curls on the back of her neck. 'So unfair, so unfair!'

'Indeed I may be; but you should not say it,' said Amaryllis; and then looking up at him with her face unguarded: 'Am I — so very unfair?' and she gave him her lips.

'Are you answered?' said Lormont. 'And indeed, my lady, there is reason why you should not deny them to me. To-morrow I go away.'

'Oh, but your arm is not well,' cried Amaryllis.

'My arm; oh, that will heal well enough once it is quit of the surgeon. And I am not going fighting — ah! and I have come on an embassy, my lady Amaryllis.'

'But of course you mean something else! Which something else do you mean?'

'It was the plain truth,' said Lormont, 'the plain truth — my lady's ugly brother. I come on an embassy. I want to know how you think of the Count of Erbach?'

'Karl?' said Amaryllis quickly. 'Karl? why — I think they are all wrong — I am sure he is not a coward — and — and he loves Yolande, Léon.'

'Yes,' said Lormont thoughtfully. 'And she?'

'Ah, Léon!' said Amaryllis softly, and she looked up into his face with tears in her deep brown eyes and a wistful little smile clinging round her lips. The Comte de Lormont understood; and accordingly he kissed her.

'So,' he said again. 'Then if he knows that ——'

'Do men always know?' said Amaryllis very softly.

'But if he loves ——' and Amaryllis nodded and smiled. 'Then he would give much to be again a great man in Solgau.' He looked at Amaryllis thoughtfully.

'Oh, you are going to him,' cried Amaryllis, and Lormont started.

'Faith, I must tell you nothing, my lady. And you will forgive me.'

'Indeed I did not mean to ask you,' said Amaryllis quickly. 'But Léon — if you can you will help him, will you not? Make the people think much of him again, so that everyone in Solgau will honour him as they used. If he has a chance he will make them do it, and you will help him, Léon, for me?'

She looked up at him eagerly, and Lormont said, kissing her:

'The ambassador hereby promises.'

But afterwards as Lormont sat alone in his room:

'I wonder what I have promised,' he said to himself.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SURPRISE OF THE BARON VON ROSENBERG

THE Comte de Lormont knew himself far more thoroughly than most men endeavour to know themselves, but even he found his knowledge often incomplete as well as amusing. But to him it befell (and in this his fate was doubtless unique) that someone should know him much better than he knew himself. It becomes, when considered carefully, a ridiculous supposition that a girl who had known him only a few months should understand him better than several years' study had enabled a cleverer man than she. Probably it would be humiliating if it were not ridiculous. Nevertheless, while the Comte de Lormont was wondering what he had promised, Amaryllis knew quite well; and also she believed (so heartily that all knowledge was out of the question), that by the grace of Léon d'Avreux de Lormont the desires of her heart were coming to pass. There have been many women since Œnone was left on the mountain who have believed like Amaryllis and found Œnone's reward,

and if you choose to condemn yourself the right is yours to call them fools. And yet in an unequal world there may be some men worth trusting. So when Amaryllis meets Léon de Lormont, and whispers something in the foolish way of these foolish women, it is often better to give monsieur the path. It is a humiliating universe — the heavens are falling, and a man steps out to prop them up; great indeed is the mind of man, his unconquerable resolve, his unfailing wit. The heavens are stayed: it is time to thank our saviour — there she sits, a chit of a girl.

Because Amaryllis knew something of this by her birthright, her eyes were shining with happiness, not all her own, as she went back to her sister. Yolande sat in the darkness with a book on her knees:

'Oh, my dear; it is far too dark to read,' cried Amaryllis.

'It has grown dark,' said Yolande.

'Why — I did not go till twilight!' said Amaryllis sitting on a stool at her sister's feet. 'I cannot have been very long.'

'I am sure you don't know.'

'Well — perhaps I don't know very much,' Amaryllis admitted very softly, and she nestled against Yolande's knee. Yolande put her arm round Ama-

ryllis's neck, and Amaryllis took the hand in both of hers and pressed it, but neither of them spoke: then Yolande sighed. Amaryllis, drawing the hand closer to her, said softly:

'Yolande, Léon is going to Karl. He promised me to help Karl so that Karl may come back again — like — like the old times.' But Yolande only said with a break in her voice:

'The old times! Ah, they are gone,' and she laughed a little bitterly.

'They will come again,' said Amaryllis. 'He promised me,' and Yolande laughed again.

'Yes, but what can he do?' she cried. 'And what I have said to him! He could not forgive, he could not care now!'

'Ah, but Yolande is Yolande,' said Amaryllis softly, and she pressed her sister's hand. 'And — I know — Yolande will be Yolande always — I know!'

'I do not know, dear,' said Yolande, 'and that is why it is so hard. And I — oh, what I said! But I did only want him to be great; and then on the stair ——! It did seem — they said — ah, but I should have known,' she cried, and her cheeks were wet. Amaryllis slipped on to her knee, and kissed her.

'He will come back and he will forgive you.

Who is there who would not forgive you, dear? And, Yolande, you will be happy — ah, so happy!'

'If — if he could forgive me!' said Yolande with a sob.

There were heavy steps in the passage, and a gruff voice:

'Well, Baron, I'll come in. I suppose there will be the lasses to look at, but as for convincing me — pho, man; you can't do it!'

The door opened:

'Dark, hey!' grunted Baron von Rosenberg.

'Indeed, father, if you had told us we were to have a visitor we would have been fit to see in the light,' said Amaryllis through the darkness.

'And I dare swear you are, lass!' said the Count of Hilpertsee.

'So pretty a compliment; and you do not dare often!' cried Amaryllis. 'And, indeed, I would make you a curtsey if you could see it.'

'And as I can't, lass?'

'As you can't — why swear I have made it!'

'Oh, I suppose you are grown too big!' said the Count of Hilpertsee.

Then in the darkness Amaryllis's voice said:

'Why, if you would stoop — and as it is quite dark ——' and the Count of Hilpertsee took her at her word.

Then two servants came in with candles, and the Count, looking down at her smiling, dimpled face, said:

'But what would monsieur say, lass?' and he chuckled.

'I think monsieur would say you were very lucky,' said Amaryllis. 'Oh, I dare swear he would!'

'*Gott!* what is one among so many? Eh, lass?' said the Count.

'Why, it is not to be talked about,' said Amaryllis. The grizzled old Count of Hilpertsee sat down with a chuckle, and:

'I won't tell, lass,' said he.

'Indeed, I am not ashamed of you,' cried Amaryllis. 'And I think I began when I was a baby.'

'Yes, you rogue; and you've witched us all ever since,' said the Count, patting her head.

'Yes, we are all under her little thumb,' said her father; 'she makes love to all of us.'

'Oh, I do do silly things,' cried Amaryllis; and she shot a quick glance at Yolande to see if the tears were dry. 'Of course, I have to do like my elders and betters,' and she made them two little curtsies to keep their eyes on her.

'Humph! we may be silly, you rogue,' said the Count of Hilpertsee, and put his arm round her

waist. 'At least each of us thinks the other is — eh, Hermann?' and he turned to the Baron von Rosenberg.

'Oh, have you been quarreling?' cried Amaryllis.

'No, you rogue; we're too old to find that pleasant. But — *Gott,* yes — you'll agree with me, Yolande, if this little lass won't. You sent him off in disgrace, and quite right too. Here is the Baron talks of making that coward Karl Prince in Solgau.'

'Karl, Prince of Solgau!' cried Amaryllis quickly clapping her hands. 'Oh, father, is it true?' Her father shook his head.

'I am only one, lass,' said he.

'One? God be thanked, yes!' growled the Count. 'A man that would not lift a finger before Ludwig. *Gott!* a man that would not even meet an insult ——'

'Of course the Count of Erbach is not here,' said Yolande scornfully. The Count started.

'Not here? What? Do you think I would not say it to his face?'

'You choose a woman to say it to,' said Yolande, thrusting blindly in her pain. 'No doubt you would say — say — a great deal.' The Count gripped the arm of his chair.

'Say? What? God's death! D'ye mean ——?' he stammered, and then he remembered that it was

a girl who had spoken. 'Why, why, lass, you may tell me I am a coward and I can laugh. But ——'

'Oh, insults mean nothing, do they?' cried Yolande. 'You may say all the worst things in your own mind to a man, and if he will not answer because he has greater things to do, because he is wiser — far, far wiser — than you, you may go about calling him a coward when he is not there to answer. Indeed we have nobles in Solgau.' And the Baron von Rosenberg stood amazed.

'Why, but you said them yourself, lass!' growled the Count.

'I — I was wrong,' said Yolande unsteadily, and a dark blush came over her face. Amaryllis slipped away from the Count's arm.

'Indeed, Count, I think you are very foolish,' she cried sharply, and she moved the candles so that Yolande was in shadow, snuffing one of them for excuse; 'and you are just like this candle, you sputter and splutter and make a lot of very foolish noise, and then you are kind enough to say you will not fight us. Oh, you are very good to us both, Count of Hilpertsee.'

'What, are you of the enemy, too?' cried the Count.

'I am one of the friends of Solgau, if it please you, sir,' said Amaryllis with a very low curtsey,

'and I wish one of its bitterest enemies wisdom — just a little wisdom.'

The Baron von Rosenberg had come to Yolande and laid his hand very gently on her shoulder. He had a vague notion that he ought to do more, but he did not know what to do. And he was very much surprised.

'Well, lass, I meant to hurt no one,' said the Count of Hilpertsee, finding himself somewhat ashamed. 'I — I talk like a man; and you are girls. I never meant to hurt you,' he said again, looking at Yolande. 'For the man, well, we shall see; let him do something — let him do something — let him do something, that is all I ask.'

'And if he does?' said Amaryllis quickly. 'When you do at last know that you are wrong, what then?'

'Well, he has some of the blood,' growled the Count. 'That is what your father said. If he were not ——'

'He is not!' cried Amaryllis, and she came back to the Count's side and took his arm to her again.

'Well, we used to trust him — and if Rosenberg backs him —' growled the Count to himself.

'And Hilpertsee,' said Amaryllis very quietly. But the Count jumped up.

'*Gott!* I shall be sorry for what you make me

say,' cried he. 'You rogue, you twist me round and round. Thank God, you do not come to the Council. I must go; *Gott,* I must go! Yolande, I never meant to hurt you. Give you good night, Baron. Good night, you rogue!' and he went out.

The Baron von Rosenberg sat by Yolande and kissed her, and drew her closer to him and took her hand in his; he said nothing, he remembered her mother. And Yolande, leaning against her father, was happier than she had been for many days, but she hardly knew why. Amaryllis moved the candles away to the end of the room and sat down to her work. She began a new pair of gloves, and as she worked there were two little dimples that came in her cheeks.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE COMTE DE LORMONT SPEAKS FOR HIMSELF

In Duke Bernhard's camp Karl passed his days in endless work with the army of Solgau. Bernhard could make little of him; short answers, and hardly a word that was not an answer came from Karl. The news of the death of Prince Eberhard came, set the men of Solgau in amazement for a day, and was news no longer. To Karl it was little but another count in the long score against Ludwig, and he put the news away in his mind till the work that lay before him was done. But for all his fierce energy and for all his resolve not to think yet of the empty throne of Solgau, sometimes when his thoughts were dwelling on Yolande it came into his mind stealthily. He was not a man to care for the name and the pomp of the prince, and he did not believe that Yolande would love him the more because he sat in the gilded chair and the trumpets sounded thrice at his entry; but he did care for the power, and he did believe that if he could show her and show Solgau that he was

the worthiest man to be its prince she might love him then. So he became anxious to devise ways of making Yolande love him, and found more than one, as men often do find many ways of doing what is done already.

Thus half unconsciously Karl grew eager to fill the throne of Solgau while the Comte de Lormont rode on his way to offer this very thing; and one afternoon Karl came back to his tent to find Lormont waiting for him.

'You want Duke Bernhard, Monsieur le Comte?' said Karl. 'His tent is ——'

'Extremely bare, Count,' said Lormont. 'But indeed I think you have the advantage of him,' and he glanced round the tent, for he was sitting on the only chair. 'Shall I sit on the table, or will you?' he asked rising slowly.

'Pray sit, monsieur,' Karl said quickly. 'You wish to speak with me?'

'Why, I am afraid it is my duty to bore you for a little if you will permit me. But pray let me take the table.' Karl called for another chair.

'You come from Père Joseph, monsieur?'

'His Excellency begged me to convey to you his salutations,' said Lormont, and Karl bowed gravely. 'You have no doubt heard of what has happened in Lichtenstein and Solgau?' Karl bowed again.

'I have to offer you as the Marshal of Solgau the regrets of my master for the ill fate that has befallen your country.' And again Karl bowed. 'You are perhaps aware that France is no longer the ally of Lichtenstein?'

'I have heard as much from Duke Bernhard,' said Karl.

'It was inevitable, of course,' said Lormont; 'as we desired to keep faith with Solgau.'

'You are very good, monsieur,' said Karl gravely; and then Lormont dropped his formal tone.

'Indeed it would have been better if we had been quicker to do it,' and he paused for Karl to answer. 'Ah, you think we are fond of words. Perhaps — pardon my speaking of myself — but perhaps we shall know one another better if I tell you that I did what a man can to make Ludwig fight me.' Karl laughed shortly:

'You are not a woman,' said he, but he gave Lormont a friendlier glance. 'When was it, monsieur?'

'I was sent to bid him make allies of his own kind,' said Lormont, 'and at the end, why, I suppose I grew angry. So did he.' Karl smiled.

'Your arm, monsieur? Did you offer that on the altar of Solgau?'

'That was the musketeers of the amiable Lud-

wig,' Lormont admitted; 'but as for making a sacrifice, why I do not sacrifice to the devil. At least you will understand that I do not love Ludwig tenderly, and though I am French allow me some whitewash to my vices'; and he looked keenly at Karl.

'The preface is well enough, monsieur,' said Karl with a smile.

'I am not sure that it is a preface,' said Lormont quickly. 'But I did not come to parade a sling. Prince Eberhard is dead; his children died before him. There is, Count, no heir in Solgau.'

'So I had supposed,' Karl answered.

'Yet there is the throne,' said Lormont with one quick glance at Karl. 'It would be for the good of Solgau that it should have some one to sit on it.'

'That is a matter for the High Council of Solgau.'

'Oh, beyond doubt,' cried Lormont; 'and yet — they cannot all be princes together.'

'Is there a proposal to divide the throne?' said Karl.

'You would suspect the Council of that?'

'I was trying to interpret your words.'

'Oh I am quite simple,' said Lormont. 'Your name, I think, was spoken of,' and he gave Karl another keen glance.

'I imagine you are mistaken,' said Karl quietly.

'I am seldom mistaken when I am interested,' said Lormont. 'And I believe, Count, that you are of the royal blood.'

'You say too much, monsieur. I have a little — like others.'

'Others? Ah, yes, the Count of Hilpertsee. Now the Count is a worthy man; but I do not think he ever conceived himself a prince.'

'Nor have I,' said Karl quickly; and that was not quite true, though he did not know it. But Lormont knew better.

'No?' he said. 'It might be worth a little thought, Count.' He paused for a moment and went on softly. 'Therefore I have come to ask you if you would be the man to sit in that gilded chair.'

'I did not know that the throne of Solgau was for France to offer,' said Karl quietly.'

'Oh we will not play with forms,' cried Lormont. 'A strong man is needed in Solgau, Count; and — give even France her due — we come to you who do not love us because we would make up to Solgau for some of the harm we have done. These are not times for weaklings. If the State is to be kept safe and happy there must be a man over her who has a mind and a will. I do not talk to flatter you.

I give you what you will answer; it is better for us, and we know it is better, that our allies should be well led. But remember that if it is better for us it is far better for Solgau. And — there are those in Solgau, Count, who ask nothing better than to see you come back in honour — your old honour and more — to the people who — love you,' he dropped the last words slowly. But Karl only answered coldly:

'You come from Père Joseph?'

'I do come from Père Joseph; perhaps you hate him, and though you are wrong there is reason. But what is that to the purpose? Here is a chance to do what you will with the State you worked for before we came.' And Karl said:

'You do not come from the Council of Solgau?'

'Is it a time to stand on forms?' cried Lormont. 'You know as well as I that you are the best man, the only man to govern Solgau. The place is open — will you take it?'

'Then the Council would not have me be Prince?' said Karl.

'The Council? Pho, you know the Council well enough. They meet and a fool speaks his folly and another fool caps it and so they talk on and on, and on, and the world goes by and still the Council are talking.'

'You said my name was spoken of. I see they did not accept it. You have been good enough to ask me to force myself on Solgau by the aid of France. It is a very pleasant way, monsieur, of binding the Prince of Solgau to serve France through good and ill. Why you should think I will sell myself to France I do not know.'

Lormont leaned back in his chair and sighed:

'You wrong us, Count, and yet you will not believe it. Well, I will be frank with you, if you will hear me out. The Council did not accept you; but the Council, what are they? They think you a coward because you did not do the impossible; they think you are afraid of war and afraid of Ludwig, and afraid of them and afraid of a fool who jostles you in a doorway. The Council are fools. You think France would buy you for her tool: if we make you prince we ask you to keep the alliance, but you may have it on my word we shall ask you to do no more. And will any man who is prince be able to do less? You must keep us at least till you have crushed Ludwig. Then I suppose you hope to throw us away. Can you? Think of it every way; if we would have a prince to be our slave is it likely we should have chosen you? There are men easier to command than you.'

'I believe you say what you think, monsieur,'

said Karl slowly. 'I believe you have been frank with me, and perhaps I have wronged you.' Lormont bowed. 'And yet see what you offer me, even if I take your word for France. I am to force myself on my own people, my own friends, by the aid of those through whom the Prince and his heirs lie dead. Let all the rest be — is that a thing that I can do?'

'Force yourself on your own friends?' Lormont repeated slowly. 'You have friends in Solgau who would be glad enough that you should be their master.'

'Have I?' said Karl coldly. 'I should be ashamed to meet them if I were brought back by your arms. Well, monsieur, I believe you have spoken like a friend, and, though I do not know why, I thank you. But I shall not use aid from France.'

For a minute or two Lormont sat silent, and then he looked up and said:

'I have spoken for France, Count; and you have heard, so far as my brains would serve me, I spoke for her well. I wonder if the Count of Erbach would believe a Frenchman if he should say that he speaks only for himself?'

'I have no right to distrust you, monsieur,' said Karl.

'Then I shall not say I think you right or wrong, and why should you care for my judgment? Other people's judgments are useful to listen to while you believe they are wrong; if you begin to think them right they are in the way — your pardon! I am talking folly — you see I speak for myself — there is one thing I must say, and I am not sure whether it is folly or not. A little while ago, Count, I made a promise, and I shall not tell you what it is, for I do not very clearly know. It was made to the Lady Amaryllis of Rosenberg; it had something to do with you, and whatever it was, I believe I have to be your friend. You probably think me impertinent; many people make that mistake, and it is not even always a mistake. But I thought you might be glad to know that such a promise was asked of me by such a lady. I am not so foolish as to offer you pity or help because you do not appear to me to be a child. What I am trying to say — and you see how I blunder over it, for it is a strange thing to blurt out after such talk as this — what I am trying to say is that there is more than one lady in Rosenberg who wishes well to the Count of Erbach. You start. In some sense I have a right to say it, and for my right you may ask the Lady Amaryllis. And I have wished to speak as your friend.' Karl had risen, and was

looking out into the night, and Lormont, coming behind him, laid his hand on Karl's arm. The two men stood together in silence for some time, and then:

'You have,' said Karl.

'Amaryllis said it,' said Lormont, and was wise enough to stop. He heard Karl sigh; and he knew that his embassy was not in vain.

'I suppose you must have peace, too?' said Lormont at last.

'I would have peace,' said Karl.

That night the Comte de Lormont lay long awake, and in the morning he complained of the ground; but it was not of the ground that he thought as he lay on it still with wide open eyes till the night was old. He was thinking of what he had promised Amaryllis, and wondering how he could keep his promise. France had made her highest bid, and failed. Then the man wanted peace. The man was most impracticable; and yet as he spoke for Solgau he was right enough; that was what made it so irritating.

And Amaryllis lay asleep with her head on her arm, smiling.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE INGENUITY OF THE MARQUIS GALEAZZO

'THE ingenious Galeazzo! God's devil! The ingenious Galeazzo,' said Duke Bernhard, and he chuckled. 'Now, my Zwicka, this is a very pretty plan.'

'Pretty, sir? Folly, sir! Man has no business to move in the winter. It's not war.'

'But indeed, my Zwicka, I think it will be war,' said Duke Bernhard, and he chuckled again. 'Ah, come in, Karl. Move your fat carcass, Zwicka. So; now, Karl, the estimable and ingenious Geleazzo has gone into the waggon trade. What do you say to that?'

'That I do not know what it means,' said Karl quietly.

'And, by the Fiend! no more did Zwicka. Did you, my Zwicka? The honest and mercantile Galeazzo had been gathering waggons together from all the earth. Now, Karl, why this sudden affection for waggons? I asked Zwicka; Zwicka seemed to think it was a new game.'

'Game, sir? I said it was folly, sir. And, by Beelzebub, I say so still.'

'My Zwicka, your great wisdom is too apt to despise mere common men like Galeazzo. Karl, what have you to say? Soul of Gustavus and Wallenstein's devils! Man, you are smiling! Stop, for your life!'

'So he means to move,' said Karl.

'The bull's eye!' cried Bernhard. 'Now the philosophic Zwicka,' and he waved his hand towards Zwicka's fat red face, 'the philosophic Zwicka is quite angry with him. My Zwicka tells me that it is against all the principles of philosophic war to move in winter. But, then, as I tell the sage, if a philosopher hits you below the belt, all that is left for poor honest men like me is to trip up his philosophic heels.'

'Why, sir, did I bid you stop?' growled Zwicka. 'I say it's not war, this winter fighting. But, by Beelzebub! here comes an oily Italian to play soldiers with us; well, by Beelzebub! we'll kick over the table!'

'Ah, you lack the gentler graces, my Zwicka. Now I,' and he dropped his voice a little, 'I would not rob the playful Galeazzo of his sport. Let the dear child have his game! Live and let live — we will have ours!'

'Is there fresh news of Ludwig, too?' asked Karl quickly.

'The butcher lacks work,' said Bernhard. 'But they tell me — indeed, my Zwicka, it was you who went on a picnic into the lands of Lichtenstein and told me that men were massing towards Schwartzsee. Now that may mean little — he may only want the castle; or it may mean much — if you think also of Galeazzo's merchandise.'

'If he joins Ludwig he will have a large force,' said Karl thoughtfully.

'Oh, Galeazzo is no fool, except before such wisdom as my Zwicka's. I am not sorry for it. I can count on what he will do. His waggons — now his waggons are half a stroke of genius.'

'Humph!' grunted Zwicka.

'Forgive us, my Zwicka,' cried Bernhard, 'we are but men! Now, Karl' — his face grew serious — 'this must stop. We will make two bites of them. I will go and hamstring Galeazzo's waggons, and then I will come back and fall on Ludwig. I shall march light. My Zwicka, we break camp tonight. We shall carry six days' rations. All the horsemen but a hundred and three thousand musketeers. I leave you the rest, Karl. Yes! And I leave you the guns. You will have them, and — you must watch Ludwig. You will not be strong

enough to meet him. Do not risk that. But watch him, watch him! He must not break away.'

So that night Duke Bernhard rode away with his cavalry, and the musketeers marched among them, holding the horses' stirrup-leathers; and they marched fast. Karl drew his little army together, and moved away towards the dark frowning rocks that hang over the Schwartzsee. Above him, on the left, the castle of Baron Hildebrand was set high in air.

Now the Marquis Galeazzo was proud of himself, even prouder of himself than was his wont. He had devised a great plan — a plan that no man had ever dared in all the years of the war. When armies lived on the land they held, and transport that could march fast was a thing unknown, war was a summer game. So the Marquis Galeazzo in his craft made a plan that should startle the careless, blustering Duke of Weimar. Quite quietly he gathered waggons from all the countryside, and food and fodder and beasts of burden, and prepared to hurry across the hills into Lichtenstein and join with its Prince. Here is a great new strategy by which the Marquis Galeazzo earns the right to be considered a soldier; for it was a scheme — let us do him justice — which few but himself could have made. But if you would ask the reason why you

have never heard before that Galeazzo was a general, you must find it in some half-dozen wiry little men on tough little horses who were seen sometimes, and mostly in the twilight, about Galeazzo's outposts. They wore mud-coloured coats, and their horses, too, at a little distance, faded into the landscape. They carried no weapons that anyone ever saw; some of them were pedlars; some of them could sell a chicken cheaply, though all round the camp the villages had been plundered again and again. They were, for the most part, in a hurry, so that they seldom had time to come far into Galeazzo's camp, and when they did come, it was for a jolly carouse with some of Galeazzo's men. They were very good companions, and they were not made drunk easily.

For some months they had enjoyed themselves and done nothing to justify their existence, when one of them, making love to a peasant girl, heard from her that Galeazzo had paid her father for a waggon. He was so much surprised that he kissed her several times in absence of mind, and talked of nothing else but kisses till he left her. But as he trotted away through the forest he forgot the girl sooner than his nature sometimes allowed him, and when he came to a rough wooden hut in the thickest of the underwood, he drank more than his

share of the beer, and was surprised to find he had done it. His companion lost no time in informing him.

'The devil! I wasn't thinking, Hans. Shut your lantern jaws. Galeazzo has been paying for a waggon! What in hell's name does that mean?'

'Paying? Paying, eh?' growled Hans; and the subject occupied them for some time.

That night there was some black game for sale in Galeazzo's camp which had come from the wooden hut in the thicket. Towards morning a man reeled through the camp and leered at the outposts with a drunken smile. But through all the day this drunken fool rode hard towards Duke Bernhard's camp, and the wiry little man and the tough little horse had little sleep till they brought him the news that Galeazzo was become a merchant in waggons.

In this manner the strategy of the Marquis Galeazzo fell among thieves; and the head thief, who was Duke Bernhard, took it to him lovingly, and made up his mind that it should be his own.

So, while the army of Galeazzo straggled in a long thin line through the forest with its waggons lurching at its tail, the van heard the crackle of musketry behind them, and the drivers of the waggons began to run and the horses to fall and kick

and writhe. Then suddenly on the middle of the wavering line fell a storm of cavalry, and broke it, and turned and rode through it again. Galeazzo's men were struggling to form with sabres whistling about their ears, and heavy horses shouldering them down and trampling them. And the horsemen swung this way and that, and never a company could get itself together to meet them; and Zwicka's fat face grew redder, and he cursed and shouted his orders while the sweat dripped off his nose. Galeazzo's cavalry came hurrying back, riding down their own friends and tried to charge, and Zwicka let his men fall open before them. They came through the midst, and the musketeers gave them a double volley and Zwicka fell upon their rear. They broke and ran this way and that through the forest, and the army of the Marquis Galeazzo gave up the ghost. Bernhard flung his last squadrons at them as they fled and rode up chuckling to Zwicka.

'Eh, my Zwicka, is it war?' he cried.

'Play, sir,' said Zwicka puffing, 'play.'

'Well, well, my Zwicka, you were getting fat,' said Bernhard patting his shoulder. 'God's light! you'll never be hotter till you're in hell!'

'Phew! I've made myself company, sir,' said Zwicka; and Bernhard chuckled again.

'My Zwicka is in spirits. Well, man, you have reason. It was very prettily done. Now we will burn these tokens of Galeazzo's honesty. Pity to burn the only things he ever paid for.'

They burnt Galeazzo's waggons, and so the ingenuity of the Marquis Galeazzo was brought to nought. Before nightfall Bernhard and his men were eight miles on their way back to Karl, and as Bernhard lay down for a few hours' sleep on the ground and rolled himself in his cloak:

'So: that's one,' he muttered and chuckled to himself.

CHAPTER XXV

AN AMBASSADOR'S HONOUR

'YES, your Excellency, that is what I always say,' said the Secretary of the Council; 'ask everybody's advice, and never take it, never take it. You must have heard me say that, my lady?'

'Oh, I have heard you say the same thing lots of times,' cried Amaryllis, and the Secretary laughed in his chest.

'Bad habits stick, my lady. Virtue is a habit, they tell us, and vice too.'

'Indeed, Doctor, you do yourself injustice,' said the Capuchin gravely; 'and I would sooner hear a thing that was worth saying said twice than many fresh things said that were not worth saying at all. Pardon me if I seem to refer to your Council.'

The Secretary's pleasant smile passed; all expression died from his face.

'I have not succeeded with the Council,' said the Capuchin thoughtfully. The Secretary eyed him for a moment.

'It is not your proposals they dislike. It is not

your offers they fear. It is you — you — you,' said he. And then in a moment:

'Oh, but, Doctor, you were Karl's tutor,' cried Amaryllis. 'And I know you can do anything with the Council, so ——'

'Karl's tutor?' said the Secretary breaking in. 'So I was; and much I did for him. Grammar — now, I was very strong in grammar. Karl — Karl never knew a word. Always did everything for himself. I did try to teach ——'

'Oh, but we don't want to talk about grammar,' cried Amaryllis.

'You see I must not talk of what you do not want,' said the Secretary with a laugh. Just then Lormont came into the room. He had hoped to find Amaryllis alone. As he turned to shut the door he smiled to himself.

'Do I intrude on a council?' The Secretary jumped up. It appeared to him that there was to be another assailant, and he had found two enough.

'Letters to write, my lady, if you will pardon me. Never get done, your Excellency, never get done,' and he shook his head and hurried out. Lormont, opening the door for him, bowed. Then he turned and bowed to the two others.

'I trust I did not frighten the learned Doctor,' said he.

'It was done already,' the Capuchin answered.

He looked from one to the other. 'I — have no letters to write — and yet I will write them ——' he turned to go. 'But do not let your news wait too long, Lormont.'

'Indeed, it shall not wait at all,' cried Amaryllis, but she held out her hand to Lormont and smiled at him. Lormont kissed it.

'I am a faithful servant,' he murmured.

'For that I will answer,' said the Capuchin. 'Forgive me, Lady Amaryllis; we work to an end you also desire.'

'I have nothing to forgive,' cried Amaryllis, and she made them a curtsey.

'But it would be well to practise,' said Lormont as he went out; and Amaryllis fell to work on her gloves.

'You travel fast, Lormont,' said the Capuchin.

'Bad news does, sir.'

'Ah, you have only your own story to tell?' said the Capuchin quickly.

'I believe you will find it enough, sir. I made my bid and the thing was not for sale.'

'I suppose — that — is bad news,' said the Capuchin slowly. 'You mean — he would not come back by our aid.'

'So he said: I think he will come back in honour

or not at all. *Cordieu,* sir, if it were I, I should say the same,' cried Lormont.

'Is there loss of honour in being wiser than fools?'

'Yes, that is what I said to myself; in another way I said it to him. Eh, it did not convince him! I do not know that it convinces me.'

'Yet you call it bad news?'

'I call it bad news; because I think there is worse to hear. If he does come back, sir, we shall have no more army from Solgau.' The Capuchin looked up quickly. 'No, he did not say it. I think he was too wise; and I — it is possible that I was too much his friend to trap him into saying it — but it was clear enough. And then ——?' said Lormont slowly, looking at the Capuchin.

'The Count of Erbach would be a faithful friend,' said Père Joseph.

'Beyond doubt, if he could be. But how to make him? The thing he wants is the thing we cannot give.' But Père Joseph sat silent drumming with his fingers on the table. 'Even you, sir ——' said Lormont, and looked at the Capuchin; but he still sat silent.

Then, aloud and to himself Lormont said: 'Ah, honest men are dear,' and he sighed.

'And not always worth buying,' said the Cap-

uchin; 'they ask too much and give too little,' and he looked at Lormont.

'Am I to answer you, sir?' said Lormont. 'Then I will have another maxim: the best friends are not bought. You give them much, ask nothing, receive more. But what is it all to the purpose? We want Solgau for an ally, Karl of Erbach wants peace. He will do nothing for us: we can do nothing for him. It is sad: these honest men with brains trouble us poor creatures who lack the honesty. But hard things, sir, are not for you to do, of course.'

'So you give up all hope, Lormont?' said the Capuchin.

'After you, sir,' said Lormont, with a trace of a smile. 'There is also Karl himself.'

But the Capuchin did not answer. He rose and paced up and down the room.

'The mill goes round, Lormont, and we think we move it; and the car rolls on and we think we guide it; but the power is not ours, and the road is not always the road we choose.'

'And often it ends in a bog,' said Lormont with a wave of his hand, but the Capuchin did not heed him.

'The wheel drags sometimes, or the road seems to end, and we cannot bring the stream back to

turn our wheel as it used and we cannot find a road over the mountains, but if we look we find a pass at last, and if we work for it we may bring another stream to do the work of the stream that is dry.'

'Then we are to work still,' said he. Lormont smiled. The Capuchin sat down.

'You saw the Secretary. Did it occur to you that we were strange company?'

'I will congratulate yourself and the Secretary on your taste and your fortune,' said Lormont.

'He is a friend of the Count of Erbach.'

'Ah, he was sitting between you and the Lady Amaryllis,' said Lormont. 'He probably found it simpler to agree with you.'

'He tells me that I frighten the Council. They will not be guided by me lest it be said that I guided them.'

'The Council's reputation must be maintained,' said Lormont. 'They are said to be guided by nothing but fools; and that seems likely; they guide themselves.'

'He would promise us nothing,' said the Capuchin. 'But there was no need. And the man knows men,' he paused. 'And so, Lormont, I shall work still.' And he paused again. 'Just as you would have me,' he said slowly with a smile.

'I have always said, sir, Karl is a man. Real men make good friends.'

'And real men are loved, are they not, Lormont?' said the Capuchin quietly, with a glance at the door.

'You treat a discredited ambassador well,' said Lormont, and he rose quickly. 'I will tell her — as an example.' And the Comte de Lormont lost no time. But the Capuchin left alone sat still looking at the ground.

'He is the only man,' he said slowly. 'There must be a way.'

But in all the hours through which he had thought of it he had not found one. Still, that afternoon he rode out from Solgau with a scanty guard to meet one of his suite, Brulart de Léon, and send him back to Richelieu.

Lormont came quickly into the room where Amaryllis sat.

'And how is your arm?' she said at once without looking up; she was very busy with the gloves. Lormont took Amaryllis and her gloves and her needles and her silk all into his arms.

'Why I think two do it better,' said he, and he looked into her eyes before he kissed her.

'Indeed, one did very well,' said Amaryllis. 'They are really just the same eyes, monsieur.'

'That gentleman is an intruder. If the Lady Amaryllis would be good enough to desire him to withdraw.'

'Oh, have you had enough?' cried Amaryllis, leaning back in his arms.

'But with monsieur looking on.'

'Oh, he does more than look on,' cried Amaryllis and paused for a moment. 'He looks — I think he looks at my heart,' and the eyes that hid themselves from Lormont were wet. He kissed her waving fragrant hair.

'Why he gave his own for it,' he said; and again he kissed her hair; 'and beyond doubt it is the best hair in the world, but it is only hair, Peach-blossom, and there are other things.'

She gave him her lips to be kissed.

'You are sure you have earned them?'

'I shall never do that, my lady,' said Lormont softly; 'and now I come back to you a poor discredited ambassador who has failed.' He handed her to the window seat and sat beside her.

'A miserable failure,' he said and shook his head.

'So very miserable?' said Amaryllis softly, slipping her arm through his and taking his hand.

'Why, there it is!' cried Lormont. 'I have failed and I ought to be miserable; but the same

eyes look at me, Amaryllis, and the same little hand is here ——'

'Where should it be?' said Amaryllis quickly. 'Was Père Joseph unkind, Léon?'

'No; the good father in his own way was nearly as kind as you, little girl. I think the good man must have found something in me to like; he does study men deeply.'

'Oh, but that is a sneer at me, too,' cried Amaryllis. 'I will not have it, monsieur!'

'That man again!' groaned Lormont. 'Do forget him.'

'Indeed, I would if you would let me.'

'There is here a poor fool called Léon, who will kiss your little shoes and be proud. But, monsieur — why, I dare say he would not look at you twice.'

'The monsieur that I knew,' said Amaryllis thoughtfully, 'he jumped into a pool for my dog and he told me fibs to make me hold his hand; indeed, I do not think he did look at me twice — it was just once — all the time.'

'There was a man, Lady Brown-eyes,' said Lormont kissing them, 'who promised you something; was that monsieur?'

'That was the ambassador!' cried Amaryllis.

'Another of them!' said Lormont. 'Are you not ashamed?'

'Not even a little,' said Amaryllis; 'and they all kiss me.'

'Ah, yes, so you must have many,' said Lormont; 'so here is for all.'

'Please, please, not all together!' cried Amaryllis in a moment. 'Please, Léon!'

'Yes, he is the man to call,' said Lormont quietly. 'But, my lady, I promised you something; will you tell me again what it was?'

'And do you forget?' said Amaryllis.

'I promised to help Karl of Erbach for the sake of a little girl who looked up at me and said ——'

'Ah, you knew before I said it,' said Amaryllis softly, looking up at him again with the loving wistful eyes that had told him her love and her sister's. 'Yes, and that was what you promised.'

'I did not forget, my lady; but will you tell me what it means?'

'You know they talk of making him Prince, but they will not do it; and he would be so good a Prince. You promised to help him come back in honour, and this is the way, Léon.'

'Yes, I was afraid I had promised that,' said Lormont slowly.

'Oh, you are not sorry? I know it is hard.'

'There is only one easy thing I would care to

promise you, my lady,' said Lormont, and she knew what that was. 'But if Karl is to be Prince I think he must win the place himself.' He paused for a moment and then, as he looked at her, he began to smile. 'Well, the ambassador has his honour. I can only tell you I have done nothing; and yet that is not all true. One thing I can tell you, and you shall say if it is nothing. I told Karl that there was more than one lady in Rosenberg who held him in regard. He was surprised; but I think it will make him long to come back to a high place in Solgau.'

'I knew he did not know,' said Amaryllis quickly. 'Ah, Léon, and you said you had done nothing.'

'Why, what is it? To give a man a message from a girl!'

'"To give a man a message from a girl,"' Amaryllis repeated, and she laughed softly. 'Oh, indeed, that is nothing — quite nothing.'

'I think it is because there are two brown eyes that would make even me work that I can believe you are right,' said Lormont. 'But, my lady, you must not be happy too soon. There is little done yet, and what is to do next I cannot see. Oh, I promised,' he said quickly, seeing her frightened look, 'and I will not fail when a chance comes, but there is much water to flow under the bridge before

you see Karl a Prince in Solgau. But we are puzzled — I am puzzled.'

'Ah, I know,' said Amaryllis softly. 'There is you and Karl.'

'You might say: "there is Karl"; and — there may be I,' said Lormont. 'But the ambassador's honour is pledged, my lady.'

'Oh, yes,' cried Amaryllis, and she slipped quickly off the seat, holding his hand and knelt and kissed it. 'There in an honour for the ambassador!' But for once she gave Lormont pain.

'My lady, that must not be!' he cried sharply, and he lifted her. 'You make me ashamed.'

'But indeed I meant it,' said Amaryllis softly in his arms.

CHAPTER XXVI

OF THE WAYS OF LUDWIG

PRINCE Ludwig had taken a side openly at last, when there was only one side left for him to take; and for all that he had no title to Solgau now that Dorothea lay under the beeches at Waldkirch, a new cloud of schemes was floating in his brain. If he had no title at least he knew that no one else had a better, and Prince Ludwig, who was not wont to underrate himself, had now determined that he would join with Galeazzo; together they would crush Bernhard and the sullen fool who hated him, and was afraid to strike at him for all the harm he had done Solgau. Yet most of all he longed for revenge — that was the name his thoughts gave it — on three men: Turenne, through whom Dorothea had been killed, and now Ludwig could nearly believe that Turenne had killed her; the Capuchin, who had made him an enemy without any cause that would have weighed with Prince Ludwig; and Lormont, the drawling fop who had insulted a man that could not defend himself.

Perhaps he did not believe that he was in the right, for that in Prince Ludwig's mind was taken for granted, without thought; but he did believe that all who opposed him were in the wrong, and he was quite sure that all his enemies were either knaves or fools, and, most of them, both.

So in a happy mood Prince Ludwig set himself to gather an army about Wolfach, which lies hard by the hills in the south of Lichtenstein.

Now at Wolfach there dwelt then a maid, and she lived all alone, for her father died fighting for his Prince, and her mother long ago when she was still a babe. There, one April morning in the streets of Wolfach (so he tells it from whom I had the tale), she came from the woods, a big bunch of violets in her hand, a very lovely maid. Her name was Erna. Swinging down the street with an easy lilting stride, their hats cocked jauntily, the sunlight flashing on their silver sword-hilts, arm in arm, joking together, marched two Englishmen, soldiers both. They saw the maid, and one of them (his blood was hotter, perhaps) marked her light step, the proud poise of her head, and her dark crown of hair. But both together swept off their hats, and, bowing, gave her greeting. She smiled at them, and then she blushed, for she felt that one of them knew she was a very lovely maid.

Because the devil who cared for Prince Ludwig would have it so, he came riding down the street with a score of his guards. He, too, saw Erna; he, too, saw that she was very beautiful, and his little eyes grew bigger, I fancy, as he looked. But he passed on and said something in a low voice to one of his guards. The man smiled, turned in his saddle, and looked back at Erna.

But the Englishmen went on to their inn, and when they were come to the big room over the porch one of them lit his pipe and said:

'So that is their great Prince, Lance.'

'And very like a weazel he is, Dick.'

'Why so he is! Now Gustavus, he was a god; and old Lesly, he was a devil; and Bernhard, why he is at least a man; but this fellow — he looks like a dirty fox, and his eyes wabble all ways. Yet, body o' me, he gets ten thousand men about him!'

Lancelot did not answer; he sat himself down in the window seat, and looked out at the budding chestnut.

'I tell thee, Lance, let us go ride with Bernhard,' cried Dick. Still Lancelot said nothing. 'Well, which is it, man, ay or no?' and he clapped his friend on the shoulder.

'What was it you said, Dick?' said Lance.

'Body o' me! Here is a man! I talk to him

wisely for half an hour — tell him of all the chiefs in Germany — give him all my ten years' learning of war — and the fool looks up in my face and lisps like a child of three, "What is it, Dick dear?" Body o' me, what is it, Lance? Have ye met with a witch, or lost your wits, or found a maid to love?'

'Why you saw her too!' said Lance.

'Her? What? The maid in the street? Lord love all fools! I have seen her a dozen times, and so have you, Master Calf.'

'So I have,' said Lance; 'and each time she is lovelier.'

'Oh the devil's in it!' cried Dick. 'So this is why we dillydally here! "Shall we join the weasel?" say I. "Perhaps," says the babe. "Will you ride with Bernhard?" I ask. "Let us wait," says Master Lance. Oh Lance, Lance, so we stay here and study the ways of Master Ludwig all for a maid with two eyes and a nose.'

'Give me three days, Dick,' said Lance.

'Three days, say ye? And what will Master Lance do with three days? By the God of fools, would you marry the maid and keep a shop or till a farm? Lord, grant me to see Rittmaster Lance at a plough's tail!'

'I shall find a way,' said Lance quietly. Dick looked at him.

'Body o' me, if you say it like that, I think you will. How many mad things have I done with you, Master Lance, since we fell on Wallenstein from the west gate of Stralsund town? And now to think you'll marry a girl!' He paused for a moment puffing at his pipe; then from out of a cloud of smoke he said gruffly, 'Humph! so here it ends!'

Lancelot caught his hand and gripped it hard.

'Never that, Dick,' he muttered.

About Wolfach Prince Ludwig gathered all the strength of Lichtenstein together, and much that was not of Lichtenstein at all, but ready to follow any man who would pay, and for choice among such men a man who was not too scrupulous. It was no small force that lay in his camp near the hills, and Prince Ludwig seeing it grow became more sure of himself and his schemes. And all this time the two Englishmen, grown wise by hard training in the midst of war, watched the great array, and if they sneered sometimes, if Dick grew more distrustful day by day, doubtless it was because they had been bred in a different school. For Ludwig's forces grew bigger, and he made agreement with the Marquis Galeazzo to meet him on the borders of Lichtenstein. He was aiming for the crown of Solgau still; but for all he knew

that Père Joseph had stayed long at Solgau, had ridden suddenly away northward, had met Brulart de Léon at Hilpertsee, he did not trouble to think what it might mean. He heard that Turenne was hunting down his false Pappenheimers along the border of Solgau, and sneered at the man for a fool. Turenne might hang them all in a row, and it was nothing to Ludwig; they had grown far beyond his power to control, as his servants sometimes did. They had harried both sides of the border, Lichtenstein and Solgau alike, and if Turenne would crush them Ludwig was much obliged to the fool who had murdered his wife. But Turenne, in the saddle night and day, hunting them down like vermin, had no notion of pleasing Ludwig, though he might have known that Ludwig cared nothing for a man who had served his turn.

So without a thought of what these men were doing on whom he must be revenged, Ludwig turned to the war. But Prince Ludwig did not prepare for war as Bernhard, or Karl, or Zwicka. He was anxious only for a great force, and he gave great promises and a little pay, and talked to his soldiers of plundering the fat lands of Solgau, and bowed when they cheered him. His men seldom cheered Zwicka; certainly when they did he swore at them. It never came into anyone's head that Karl of

Erbach would care to be cheered. But Prince Ludwig was proud of such confidence. Sometimes in the background two tall Englishmen looked at the motley array and grinned at each other.

That April day waned towards evening; the sun set rosily behind the dark western woods, paled and was gone. In the gloom Lancelot Onslow and Dick Zouch took their evening walk; nor was it chance (as some of you will be very sure), nor was it chance that led them past Erna's door. Then the soft night air was rent asunder by a sudden shriek; one word only the Englishmen heard as they ran down the lane.

'Never,' cried Erna, 'never!'

The door of her cottage was flung wide; they saw her by the faint candlelight struggling in two men's arms, and Dick Zouch laughed aloud and he cried:

'Dagger and sword — I'm with you, Lance!'

Four men there were in the hut, and they had scarce time to draw their swords before the English were on them, one man mad with the lust of fight and the other aflame with love. It was no long struggle; in the little room with its wooden walls was no space to shun the first onset, and in the first onset that fight was won. So, very soon, Dick Zouch sat himself on the table and wiped his

sword, and looked at the dead. 'Ha!' he said and he laughed. Then he looked at Lance and Erna:

'These be the Prince's Guard,' said he, and he laughed again in content.

Lance, with Erna's hand in his, looked in her face; she dropped her eyes, and her cheeks flushed very dark. From head to foot she was trembling.

'They said — they came to take me — for him,' she said in a low voice. Dick Zouch whistled. Lance pressed her hand; he drew her closer and whispered:

'Lady, will you trust me?' She lifted her head; her honest dark eyes looked into his, as a man's gaze meets his friend's.

'Yes, sir,' said Erna; and Lancelot kissed her hand.

'I will be true,' he said; then he turned on his heel and cried. 'Dick, here is our choice made for us. No place for us now in Wolfach! Let us ride to-night for Bernhard's men at the Schwartzsee!'

Dick Zouch said never a word. He walked to the door and peered out into the darkness.

'There be horses five, and one is saddled for a maid,' said he.

So that night they galloped out of Wolfach, and through the darkness they rode towards the castle of the Schwartzsee. The soft spring breeze stirred

in the forest as Lance and Erna rode side by side; hardly a word they said, only once or twice in the gloom their eyes met, but each felt a joy that was new as they rode through the darkness, man and maid. An owl screeched, a wolf howled far away, the trees whispered together over their heads as they rode on southward with the stars for their guide. At last the sky in the east grew lighter, the pale gold light of dawn shimmered through the budding trees. Lance's hand sought her bridle, his bare hand fell on hers, and she looked up in his face and smiled. Then as the sky grew brighter Dick Zouch spurred forward from fifty yards behind.

'Master Lance,' he cried, 'man and beast must sleep, and by now I think we are safe.'

'Ay, Dick; it will be well to rest, Erna,' said Lance.

'Yes, Lance,' said the maid.

They turned aside and rode down to a little glade where the trees rise out of bare grey rock over which the water falls. There they sprang from their horses, the two men and the maid. In the shade about their feet the violets clustered thick, with a primrose shining pale among them here and there. The horses stretched their necks and nosed into the grass. Lance held out his hand to Erna:

'Erna, you came from Wolfach a maid; so, if you will it so, shall you come to Schwartzsee. But I love you, Erna. If you will come to Schwartzsee my wife, I pledge my honour you shall never grieve for the day you rode from Wolfach with me.' Erna did not answer. Then Dick Zouch came forward and took her hands in his.

'And for his honour, Lady Erna, my honour,' said he, and in a moment he let her hand fall.

Erna's pure eyes sought Lance's, and all was silent in the glade but for the plash of water and a thrush's song. Erna put her little hand in Lance's

'Ay, and mine,' said she. So they washed in the brook, and they made a meal in the glade, of bread and meat and a flask of wine, and then they slept on the violets. But Dick Zouch lay by the forest path and his sword was drawn at his side. In the evening they woke and rode on to the Schwartzsee, and Lance and Erna went hand in hand.

It was three mornings after when they drew near to the little hamlet that lies below the castle of the Schwartzsee, and there in the valley, riding with his wife, they met the Baron Hildebrand von Schwartzsee. The Baron Hildebrand reined up:

'Now who may you be, gentlemen?' said he.

'Now why should we tell you?' said Lance.

'Because you come out of Lichtenstein,' said the Baron.

'Now unless all men lie, Baron Hildebrand, you have done the like yourself.'

'So you know my name?' cried the Baron.

'And your fame,' quoth Dick with a bow.

'Therefore have we come to join your force,' said Lance quickly. The Baron looked them up and down, and he saw they were very proper men.

'Ay, ay; and the maid?' he growled.

'Here is no maid, Baron,' said Lance.

'How?' cried Baron Hildebrand.

'But, before God, a wife,' said Lance very quietly, and Erna looked proudly at the Baron and blushed. The Baron chuckled:

'Ay, ay: and before men?' said he. Lance's eyes flashed.

'For the gentleman that denies it, Baron, I am his most humble servant,' he cried.

Dick Zouch shook his head gravely:

'And may the Lord have mercy on his sinful soul,' said he.

'God save us all! here are fire-eaters,' cried the Baron. But the Baroness rode forward and laid her hand on Erna's arm.

'You are very beautiful, dear,' said she.

'We have been at Wolfach a month, Baron. We

have seen all Ludwig's force — and a force of footpads it is. All this can we tell you. And my wife, the Lady Erna, we took from Wolfach.' Lance lowered his voice. 'You know Ludwig, Baron?' said he. The Baron nodded.

'You are very welcome, gentlemen ——' he began, but his wife broke in.

'And I trust you will honour me at our castle,' said she.

And this is how the Prince Ludwig dealt by his people, by the children of those who died to serve him; and, as it happens, this also is how full news of Ludwig's army came to the Marshal of Solgau.

That night in the castle of the Schwartzsee, when the ladies had gone, a song was sung that Dick Zouch had made; and in English some of it sounds like this:

Pandarus he was a lusty blade
(Sing hey for the dagger that stabbed him!)
Pandarus he was agog for a maid
(Sing ho for the devil that grabbed him!)

Pandarus he met a man or twain
(Sing hey for the dagger that killed him!)
Pandarus—he never throve again
(Sing ho for the devil that grilled him!)

CHAPTER XXVII

THE FAIRIES OF THE BLACK LAKE

On the day that he and Galeazzo had chosen, Prince Ludwig began his march. Then he learnt that Bernhard had gone to meet Galeazzo, and he pressed on to crush the little force that was left. He began the long ascent up the winding road through the hills. He came into touch with Karl's outposts and they fell back. Ludwig pressed on the more eagerly, up and up till the trees grew scantier, and the bare rocks stood gaunt on either side. Still Karl's men fell back, and Ludwig, sure of himself and sure of his greater force pushed on to crush the little army that did not dare meet him. Karl, watching him from a hill-top, who knew from Dick and Lance what manner of men made up this force, fell back further still. Then one morning Ludwig's scouts rode in to tell him that scarcely a thousand men barred the way. He could see their pikes glittering on the highest peak before him. He had come to the summit of the pass where the gap in the mountains widens and the Schwartzsee lies glittering

dark and deep. When this scanty company was crushed the road lay clear down to the plains and the forest, where he was to join Galeazzo. Ludwig told his men as much; they had only to crush a handful of peasants from Solgau and the war was half done. It would be a pleasant morning's game. Ludwig's faithful soldiers shouted lustily in confident answer.

The attack was begun; Ludwig's cannon thundered away at the hillside, and never a gun answered them. Two regiments of the men of Lichtenstein advanced, began to climb the steep, smooth slope, and were halfway up, when three tongues of red fire belched forth from the grey rocks, and a storm of spreading bullets tore through their ranks. They broke and ran, and all down the hillside the guns ploughed furrows through the struggling crowd. Again Ludwig's cannon spoke, and shot was hailed on the grey hillside and his own wounded men, while the guns of Solgau answered only fitfully and fell at last to silence. More men were coming up; the little basin in the hills grew gay with Ludwig's army; and a new attack was tried. On three different sides a regiment was to climb the hill. The guns met them again and drove them back on one side, but by the other steeper paths still Ludwig's men pressed on, for there were but few to

meet them, and they were ashamed to fail. Musket fire met them as they scrambled over the rocks, a fire that flung dead men down on their comrades' heads, and rolled dead and living over the steep sharp crags together. Still some strove on till the long pikes met them and pushed them writhing down. On the hilltop Karl of Erbach stood, and he gave few glances to the scattered regiments that were struggling more feebly now against the pikes and the muskets of the men he had chosen to bar Ludwig's way. His eyes were on Ludwig's army crowding together in the narrow space, and he saw that no more were coming up the narrow road round the bluff shoulder of the hill over against the castle. He turned sharply to a gunner:

'The signal!' he cried, and one gun was fired thrice.

The Lichtensteiners were straggling back in disorder, and they surged to and fro in the narrow space. All around the hills burst into flame. From front and flank and rear shot tore through Ludwig's men. They tried to turn their guns to meet it, but every way was a storm of death. They ran this way and that, and no man heeded the few orders that came. The dark smoke hung about the hills and the cannon thundered on, and the sound came booming back loud and deep over the curses and

shrieks and groans in the bloody mangled mob, that fought to get out of the death-trap where it was caught. Trampling one another under foot, stabbing their comrades in the back, they fought to get to the narrow pass by which they had come. And still the cannon roared, tearing gaps of death among them as they struggled madly each for his own life. A row of men were blasted to the ground, and those behind sprang forward treading on them, only to find their fate. Dashing madly down the hillside where the narrow pass begins came Karl's handful of horse and broke through and rode back again. Behind them musketeers ran down and lay behind the rocks firing across the narrow road. Soon, while the horsemen straggled back to shelter, a gun came lumbering down, and pikemen and musketeers formed about it and the gun swept the roadway clear. The sun rose high and pierced the rolling clouds of smoke shining hot on the helpless wretches Prince Ludwig had led to crush the Marshal of Solgau. And the Marshal of Solgau stood grim and silent while the work went on. A man came out from the crowd waving a white flag frantically, and ran towards the hill where Karl stood. Karl gave a sharp order to his gunners; on his hill the guns were silent, and the man ran wildly on, still waving his flag.

'Stop it, in God's name, stop it!' he shrieked. 'We surrender.'

'Where is Prince Ludwig?' cried Karl.

'Run, sir. Stop it, for God's sake, stop it!' But Karl muttered an oath.

'Lay down your arms in the middle and march there!' He pointed to a place between two of the hills where his guns stood. 'Is there room?'

'There's room now,' muttered the man, and he hurried back shouting to his fellows. They ran herding together like sheep and crowded into the narrow space. Slowly the guns fell to silence all round and slowly the thick clouds of smoke rolled away, and the sun shone down hot on the dying and the dead, and men crawled to drink the water of the Schwartzsee, lapping it in their hands, though now it was turbid and thick. The men of Solgau on the hilltops were laughing and shouting.

Soon a horseman came galloping up from the other side of the hills, halted a few hundred yards away, and stood up in his stirrups peering forward, shading his eyes with his hand. He rode nearer, stopped and looked again. Then suddenly he tore off his hat and waved it round his head.

'Solgau, Solgau!' he shouted, galloping on. He saw Karl talking to his officers on the hillside, and cried:

'Duke Bernhard is coming, sir; and we have smashed Ludwig, sir?'

'You may tell Duke Bernhard you have seen the army of Lichtenstein,' said Karl quietly, and the man saluted, turned and rode off laughing.

Then a little later came Duke Bernhard riding hard with only a few men about him, and as he came between the hills he looked round at the men on them, and then at the dead, and then at the listless crowd of living, and chuckled till he shook in his saddle.

'This is war, Karl!' he cried. 'God's angels! this is war.'

And Karl, turning, said quietly:

'Ludwig has escaped.'

'*Gott!* is that all you can say? I never saw a prettier fight. Man, you ought to have been a soldier. Gustavus himself, Karl. How many escaped?'

'Perhaps three hundred,' said Karl.

'Three hundred? God in heaven! and they were three to one. Now, we beat the ingenious Galeazzo, but some of him got away.'

'Ah, Galeazzo is not a fool,' said Karl.

'Why that is true. But — eh, what? Did Ludwig pass that gun?' and he pointed to the gun that was brought forward to clear the roadway.

Karl told him the story, and Bernhard nodded gravely.

'You have little to learn, Karl. And I was fool enough to tell you not to fight. Bones of the Fiend! you will never sing your own praises, but I will for you. And I am a very sweet singer, Karl. Sang psalms to Gustavus. Well ——' he paused, and looked keenly at Karl, 'I suppose you would be after Ludwig?'

'I should like to catch Ludwig,' said Karl through his teeth, and Bernhard chuckled.

'*Gott!* so should I. But you have earned the right. Well — I suppose your horsemen are fresh — take them and catch him. But they are few enough. I will send Zwicka after you. Catch him, in God's name if you can, but don't risk yourself for — for —' he paused a moment watching the fierce light in Karl's eyes. Then he slapped his hand down on Karl's shoulder: 'Karl, Karl, for the sake of the girl.'

But Karl only answered:

'There is little to fear in Ludwig.'

'Oh, rats bite — in a corner,' said Bernhard. 'God's dagger! The luck is with you, Karl! Well — keep it!'

And Karl, with fifty or sixty horsemen, rode away to catch the Prince without an army, while

Brulart de Léon galloped hard nearer and nearer Paris, and the Capuchin travelled slowly back to Solgau. But of these things Karl knew nothing. For all he said little to Bernhard, he smiled to himself as he rode along thinking how the fairies had caught Ludwig by the black lake; and also he remembered that now there was something for those ladies in Rosenberg to hear, who wished him well.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A RAT IN A CORNER

PRINCE LUDWIG had fled early in the fight. Soon after that triple gun-fire that called the circling hills to share in the work, he had fallen back with a few of his guard, that he might observe the battle more calmly. Safe himself, he saw the wild little charge that opened the way for a gun to fire across the only path of escape; then he turned and gnawing his thin wiry moustache, he rode quickly away. He did not blame himself at all; he blamed the cowards who had not stormed the one little hill that blocked his way; as he hurried on he cursed his soldiers again and again. Never had man been served so ill as Prince Ludwig von Lichtenstein. Some bitter notion of injustice rankled in his mind: other men had luck, other men succeeded; it was only he, Prince Ludwig, who was always the plaything of fate. It did not occur to him to look for a reason, because he knew quite well that there could be no reason. Now that he was beaten, now that he was flung back with the loss of his army and his name on the

country he had ruined, his hate for the Capuchin mastered his reason and his will. He believed that it was the Capuchin who had made him false to France; that it was the Capuchin who had planned the death of Dorothea to keep him from the throne of Solgau — and all this because the Capuchin had proved late enough that Prince Ludwig had played him false. For Ludwig had one element of greatness: a sublime belief in himself. He had deceived himself very completely when he ran away from Karl.

And Karl followed him, riding hard with his handful of horsemen, another man with a great trust in himself. But he was unlike Ludwig most of all in this — if we may forget that Ludwig was a knave: — Karl always found time to consider whether he was telling himself the truth. Faster and faster Karl pushed on till long after darkness had fallen; his men were a little surprised. Some of them who had served Bernhard knew well enough these headlong marches that tore victory out of the heart of defeat, or reaped a double fruit from victory. But Karl of Erbach — who had ever thought of Karl as a man to fling all thought of safety away, and with only a few guards about him, dash through an enemy's country to seize a man who was already beaten and disgraced? They knew Karl

well enough to sneer at the fools in Solgau who thought him a coward; they would have followed him wherever he led; they had trusted him through the long disheartening days when he fell back before Ludwig, and they felt no surprise when they saw him lay his trap and laughed and nodded to one another when they saw how well he did it. But here was a new Karl: a man of energy as fiery as Bernhard's own, and they were amazed to meet him. He was, indeed, a man whom few people had met, and only a very few guessed that there was such a man at all. Yet he was not a new man; if Karl had changed since the false Pappenheimers first came to Solgau, he had become only sterner and less happy. Distrust and disappointment had given him no new strength and no new courage; he was proving himself now, while before there had been no chance and no need. On that his mind was set: he meant to prove himself, so that no one could doubt: and he was very glad that his duty offered him the chance; and always he thought of the lady who wished him well.

He hurried on through the lands of Lichtenstein day after day, and still Ludwig was far before him; the worse-mounted among his men fell out of the ranks, and the little band grew smaller, but still it hurried on. Prince Ludwig came to his castle at

Lichtenstein and found a most thoroughly frightened guard awaiting him. Rumour had been faster than he; and when the warder saw how few Ludwig's followers were and marked their jaded horses, the castle knew that rumour had not lied, and men and women ran out into the courtyard crying to one another, asking how soon Bernhard would be upon them. There was no heart in Lichtenstein.

As Ludwig came over the drawbridge a man in Pappenheim's colours sat still on his horse watching from the wood. The sun was just setting.

'Eh, the great Prince comes back from the wars,' he said aloud in French. 'There is the great Prince; well ——'

'Robinet et Mariette vivent en grande union,
Ils s'aiment à la franquette sans contrainte et sans façon,'

he sang loudly, riding up the hill. '*Sangdieu!* Robinet has killed Mariette. *Une grande union* beyond doubt, my greatest of Princes. Soul of Saint Belial! he is still worth a hundred crowns.' He reined up his horse by the drawbridge and shouted, 'Adolf, Adolf, my friend.' But he cried the name many times before anyone answered him. Then the warder came, began to curse him, and stopped suddenly.

'What, Louis, is it you?'

'*Sangdieu!* yes! the faithful Louis, with great news for your illustrious Prince!' He was let in, halted in the gateway, and shouted across the courtyard:

'Where is his victorious Highness?'

The anxious chattering crowd turned and stared at him and fell silent, while the big man laughed at them, and Ludwig hurried forward:

'Seize him, Albrecht,' he cried to the quartermaster; but Albrecht hung back.

'Eh, *mon Prince,* I came of my own will, and I did not come to be clapped into irons. And *sangdieu,* if you treat me as ill as you say, I tell you nothing.'

'You have news?' cried Ludwig. The Frenchman dismounted, drew his reins round his arm, and walked up to Ludwig and began to speak in French:

'Why, most of us are hanged and some of us are shot, and a few are run away. So your servants fare, Prince Ludwig — much like your other soldiers, eh?'

'You will find yourself in irons yet,' said Ludwig savagely.

'Well, who knows? Bernhard would soon be here to let me out. But *sangdieu!* I have more to tell you than this. How much would you give

to kill the Capuchin, Prince Ludwig? Come, now, is it worth a hundred crowns?' Ludwig started: it was the thing he most longed to do. He knew he was beaten; but if he must fall he meant to fall biting and scratching.

'What do you know of him?' said Ludwig carelessly.

'No, no; pay me my money and I'll tell my tale.'

'Come in, then, fool,' said Ludwig, turning to a door.

'No, curse it; I come to do you a favour, and you quarrel with the terms. Here, my friends,' he cried quickly in German, turning to the crowd: 'here is your illustrious Prince haggling ——'

'You shall have them,' cried Ludwig in French. 'Hold your cursed tongue!'

'So: resume your conversations, my friends,' said the Frenchman, with a wave of his hand to the crowd. 'And now for the money, Prince Ludwig.'

'You shall have it.'

'I had rather see it. *Sangdieu!* give me an earnest at least!' Ludwig counted out twenty crowns so carefully that the Frenchman laughed.

'Milking a bull!' he cried. 'And now for the way to kill him.' He took Ludwig's arm and whispered: 'The monk lies at Waldkirch in Solgau; his guard is just twenty men. Eh, Prince Ludwig,

it is but a step across the border. There are no troops near. The Butcher Turenne is thirty miles away, and Bernhard is not here yet. There is a chance for you, Prince Ludwig,' — he flung Ludwig off — 'Sangdieu! even you can hardly fail. Is it not worth the money? So now for your gracious bounty!'

But Ludwig, looking at him with a cold sneer, said:

'You shall have it when I have done.'

'When it is done! Body o' Satan! My money to turn on the chance that Ludwig wins for once! *Sangdieu!* no, Ludwig. Out with your eighty crowns!'

'You had better be careful, fool,' said Ludwig coldly.

The Frenchman caught at his sword, and his face grew darker:

'You mean to cheat me, Ludwig? You blundering cowardly fool, bleed! bleed! Bring out your purse!'

'Quartermaster!' cried Ludwig sharply, stepping back.

'Quartermaster, come and pay your Prince's debts. Quartermaster, come and help your Prince to cheat. Come along, Albrecht,' cried the Frenchman. 'Bah! you Jew knave.' He snapped his

fingers in Ludwig's face. Ludwig struck at him; the Frenchman drew his sword, and at last Albrecht ran up and caught his arm.

'What! you are turned miser's bully,' cried the Frenchman, flinging him off, and Albrecht's men ran up to help.

'Hold the beast!' shouted Albrecht, staggering to his feet. The Frenchman sprang on his horse. There were two men who caught his arm and clung to it, and he stabbed them low with his left hand, and then he drove in his spurs and rushed his horse at the low wall of the courtyard, and leapt over out into the darkness down to the river beneath.

'*Au revoir,* Ludwig,' he cried. '*Au revoir* — in hell.' They heard the great sounding splash as he fell into the water, and craning over the wall they saw him for a moment in the dim light waving his sword over his head; and then he passed into shadow.

'He will be there first,' said Prince Ludwig.

So Prince Ludwig came back safe to his castle, and in his hour of defeat found that fate had at last grown kind; before dawn, with every man he could muster, he marched on Waldkirch. Karl and his men learned from the villagers the way he had gone, and pressed on in pursuit; they were in

country they knew only a little, but if Ludwig were kind enough to turn to Solgau soon they would know it better. But they were no equal match for Ludwig, less equal than they guessed, for they did not know how many he had found in the castle. Ludwig's men, happy for the most part to find that he would fight to the end — for an attack on Père Joseph seemed to them fighting — followed eagerly. At least they would hurt their foes, though it might not aid themselves.

But Ludwig's Pappenheimer was not yet in hell. He kept his seat when he plunged into the river, and in a moment his horse was swimming with him down stream into the darkness. Far out of sight of the castle he turned and made for the shore, and when his horse had scrambled up the bank, he stopped for a moment irresolute, then slapped his hand down on his thigh and rode away. All night he rode on, finding his way easily through the country he had plundered, for he was riding through the marches of Lichtenstein. At last, when the sky in the east was growing grey, a challenge rang out sharply in front of him, and he stopped on the instant. He knew the ways of Turenne.

'Friend,' he shouted, 'friend! with news for the Vicomte de Turenne!'

The sentry cried for the guard; the sergeant

and half a dozen men came running up with lanterns.

'Ho, ho, you are very good to us,' cried the sergeant. 'Come on, my friend. There are nine of your fellows like fruit on the trees there; you'll make a very pretty tenth!'

'Body o' Satan! shall I? Wait and see! I have news of Ludwig for the Vicomte of Turenne.'

'Rouse the Vicomte to hear a Pappenheimer lie? You don't know your place, my friend. It's there ——' and the sergeant pointed to the trees.

'*Sangdieu!* I tell you your Vicomte would give his ears to hear my news, and if he does not hear it now, Beelzebub's babes! he may as well not hear it at all.'

'Well, out with it, then,' said the sergeant gruffly.

'*Sangdieu!* no! It's for your betters.'

'Humph! Comes from you, too. News of Ludwig — it is news of Ludwig?' said the sergeant doubtfully.

'Eh, did I tell you so, or not?'

'News of Ludwig — humph! Come, then; you can do without your sword.'

In a few minutes the Pappenheimer was brought into a tent where Turenne and Armand the lieutenant sat together. There were two lanterns on the

table. Turenne looked at the man keenly and waved his hand to the sergeant.

'You may go! And now,' he said, as the flap of the tent fell, 'why do you come here?'

'*Sangdieu*, I have news of Ludwig, sir; and I ask a pardon for the price' — he saw that he had a stronger man than Ludwig before him.

'You have yet to earn it,' said Turenne coldly.

'If the news is worth it, sir, shall I have it?'

'I shall not hang you now, whatever your news is worth. You appear to have found courage to come here; find courage to tell your tale.'

'Père Joseph, sir, he is at Waldkirch with a small guard.'

'You said you had news,' said Turenne.

'Ludwig has marched to kill him, sir.' Turenne started and his eyes flashed.

'Ludwig has come back to the castle?'

'Yes, sir. His army was all lost at the Schwartzsee, but he has taken his guard and a few who ran with him.'

'Ran!' Turenne said with a sneer. 'You know this? When did he go?'

'I think he meant to start at dawn, sir. It is true enough. I was there when the news was brought to him and he made up his mind to go. Then he quarrelled with me and I had to run.' And

Turenne leaning back in his chair, not looking at the Pappenheimer, muttered to himself:

'Ludwig, Ludwig the wife-killer, broke loose at last!...Ah!...God is kind after all!' He sprang up: 'Sound boot and saddle, Armand!' and the lieutenant ran out. Turenne scrawled a few lines and tossed the parchment and his purse to the Pappenheimer.

'There is your pardon and your pay,' and he turned to buckle on his sword. So the Pappenheimer sold his second man for a better price than the first, and he rode away chuckling to think that Ludwig had paid him twenty crowns for a fresh disaster.

CHAPTER XXIX

WHAT BEFELL AT WALDKIRCH

YOLANDE had gone back to Rosenberg. She could not bear the chatter and bustle of Solgau. Lormont's phrase was never out of her thoughts: 'They deserve punishment — the fools who sneered at the Marshal of Solgau.' She had found that one of these fools had a punishment to bear, and while she knew that it was just enough she longed to bear it alone; not even to her sister could she tell all her sorrow. There was only one in all the earth to whom she could ever speak of it, and he was far away. Yet she was suffering for a few foolish words more pain than Karl felt on the day that he left her in silence on the stair and rode back to Bernhard. A childish longing for glory and fame, a childish love for a sharp answer, she told herself, had stung Karl, perhaps had gone near to ruin his life. She did not think of her own. But she judged herself too harshly; a woman to whom all things in shame and grief and pain came eagerly for comfort was not one who could sneer for the sneer's sake. The bitter words she had flung at

Karl could never have been said by her to anyone but him. She longed to make him do worthily of himself, and that, she thought, was the way. Only now, with Lormont's praises fresh in her ears, and the knowledge that the old Capuchin was of Lormont's mind, had she come to see that Karl had done worthily of himself before ever the war began. Of course she was very foolish; of course she is the only person who has ever misjudged one of the men who do not parade their strength; of course, in her place you would never have sneered at Karl; and if you would never have found anything in him to love, let us pass that by and have no pity for the Lady Yolande as she sits at Rosenberg looking out over the beech woods with her face grown paler and lovelier still, and her eyes dark and sorrowful. She would ask no pity from any man.

One day, as she sat at the window with her needle lying untouched beside her, her maid came running into the room smiling.

'Oh, my lady, such a tale!' and she stopped breathless.

'What is it, Elsa?'

'Such a tale, my Lady! Friedrich says they say the Count has beaten Ludwig!' Yolande's voice trembled a little as she said:

'Who says so, Elsa?'

'Friedrich says the tale is all over the country, my lady. Do you think it can be true?'

'It is quite possible,' said Yolande quietly, taking up her work. 'We shall know soon. Give me the work-basket, Elsa.'

'Great news, my lady, is it not?' cried Elsa.

'It would be good news for Solgau,' Yolande answered.

But outside in the corridor Elsa laughed to herself.

'Good news for Solgau? Oh, yes, my lady! And what will he get by his victory, my lady?' These were the thoughts that made her laugh. 'Is there a maid will give the man his due?'

'Hey, Elsa! very pleased with yourself!' said the steward, meeting her.

'Oh, 'tis catching, sir!'

'Is it? Then let me catch it,' cried the steward, and kissed her. Elsa pushed him away.

'Wait till Otto comes back with the army, you wretch!' said Elsa, most bitterly angry.

'Humph! there will be doings then. Shameful, Elsa, shameful!' said the steward, chuckling.

'There is no shame in it,' cried Elsa. 'Ask my lady.' And in the midst of her anger she laughed.

'Hold your tongue, wench!' said the steward

sternly; and Elsa ran off laughing. But when she had gone the steward chuckled more than a grave man ought.

Yolande was not using her work-basket. She did not doubt the news at all, but her heart longed to know certainly that it was true. She knew Père Joseph was at Waldkirch, and Waldkirch was but four miles away; so just after noon the Lady Yolande went riding alone. She found Père Joseph in the little village inn, and the guard let her come to him without question.

The Capuchin rose gravely as she came into his room, and handed her a chair.

'I am honoured by this visit, my lady.'

'I — I came to know if you had heard ——' said Yolande, blushing and looking at the ground.

'You have something to tell me?' said the Capuchin quietly, bending over his papers that she might look where she would. She did not answer and he saw that she found it hard to speak. 'There is a rumour, they tell me — it is but a rumour, but I do not find it hard to believe, though I know nothing — that Prince Ludwig has been defeated at the Schwartzsee by the Marshal of Solgau. Perhaps you had more to tell me?'

'I came to know if it was true,' said Yolande in a low voice.

'I do not know,' said the Capuchin quietly. 'If it happened on the day that rumour says, before nightfall I ought to know. To me it does not seem hard to believe. I am one of those, my lady, who have always thought that the Count of Erbach was held in too little honour in Solgau. I think he has done more for Solgau than her people are wise enough to understand. But this is nothing to you. I know that Duke Bernhard, with part of his army went to meet the Marquis Galeazzo, and that the Count of Erbach was left to meet Ludwig with a smaller force. What more there may be to hear I hope to know to-night. And' — he paused for a moment — 'and it shall be my first care to tell one who cares so much for Solgau as you.' In the street below came the noise of horses. Men ran quickly into the inn, and the door was flung open.

'Ah, your Excellency is here!' cried Karl: then he saw Yolande and started back. 'My God!' he muttered. 'Ludwig with a hundred men is but a little behind us. I have some thirty men. We must hope to hold the inn.'

'Ludwig?' said the Capuchin slowly. Karl had turned and was giving sharp orders to the Scotsman. 'Ludwig is beaten, then. Ludwig is coming to kill me. It would be well for you to go with the Lady Yolande, Count.'

'We must hope to hold the inn,' said Karl slowly, and he looked at Yolande.

'Yes,' said Yolande softly; and she looked at Karl with a timid smile, and Karl smiled back at her and she was happy. Then his face grew stern again. 'It is but a chance we can save you, now; but we cannot leave you to death. How Ludwig knew you were here God knows. He has a hundred men, and he is desperate and he hates you.' The Capuchin looked from the man to the girl.

'You will not go?' he said to Yolande.

'I — I cannot ask him,' said she; and Père Joseph looked up at Karl:

'The Prince von Lichtenstein has a strong force? Yes. The Prince von Lichtenstein comes to kill me? Yes. And you? What is your part in the piece, monsieur?'

'To fight!' said Karl, and went out. Ludwig's men were clattering up the street.

'For me,' said Père Joseph slowly. Then he turned to Yolande. 'Forgive me, my daughter.'

'He will save us,' said Yolande softly; but Ludwig had more than a hundred men and there were not fifty to meet him. And Karl set about his work. He knew that Zwicka was less than a day's march behind him, and he had sent a man back to Zwicka; and he was sure enough that Zwicka

would come as soon as horses could bring him. But he doubted if that would be soon enough. Only a few of Père Joseph's guard had muskets, but for a little their steady fire kept Ludwig back. Soon they were fighting hand to hand at the doors and windows, and the clash of arms and the shouts and oaths rang through the little room upstairs where the old monk and the girl were praying together. Here and there Ludwig's men broke in and fell on the defenders from behind, till at last only Karl and some half-dozen were left holding the narrow stair. Slowly they fell back, and slowly Ludwig won his way up leaving many dead behind him; and one by one Karl's men fell till at last only he and the Scotsman were left standing panting and bloody on the top, and Ludwig's men fell back for a moment and then ran at them altogether, and Karl staggered and fell. Then the Scotsman fell on them madly, thrusting all round him, caring nothing to save himself; and they gave way before him and still he lunged this way and that; and while the blood dripped from his wounds and his sword he was shouting:

'Oh, wha daur meddle wi' me?
Oh, wha daur meddle wi' me?
My name it is little Jock Elliott——'

From behind one of his men Ludwig fired a pistol at him, and Jock Elliott, falling forward, thrust at the man and killed him and died.

Then Ludwig sprang over his body and ran up into the little room; the Capuchin had risen from his knees and sat quietly facing the door, and Yolande was beside him.

'So, my holy father!' cried Ludwig; then his eyes fell on Yolande and he laughed. 'Bring in the pig of Erbach!' Two of his men dragged in the bleeding body that still lived and still could feel. Yolande started from her chair and Ludwig flung her reeling back. 'No, no, mistress, you shall see the pig bleed and die. See how he bleeds!' and he stirred Karl with his foot. 'Keep his mistress still, Albrecht.'

'*Teufel!* you can do that, Adolf,' growled Albrecht, and turned away; and the other man laughed and stood over Yolande. But she did not move: she sat still looking at Karl with big dry eyes.

'Cheer up, cheer up, soon be dead!' said Adolf, and chuckled and patted her cheek. Yolande hardly felt it: she only saw Karl lying bleeding to death. But Karl felt it and groaned.

'Ah, ha, my holy father. So God watches over his ministers! And the holy father was to have a cardinal's hat, a pretty red hat was to come to the

holy father. And now, and now, *nunc Domine dimittis servum tuum,* and without the hat. Oh Lord, thou art most thoughtless!' cried Ludwig. He drew his sword and pricked the Capuchin.

'See, see; is it not a sweet sharp point? Oh this careless God! He has delivered his faithful servant into the hand of the spoiler. Alas! I am no ally of France, my father. Come, it is time for repentance. Confess your sins: you made a mistake, you fool, you sham saint, you cheating priest!' But Père Joseph said nothing that Ludwig heard. He was praying for the man on the floor and the girl beside him. Ludwig's men had fallen on the beer and wine in the inn, and their drinking songs sounded loud above Ludwig's taunts. The inn rang with the noise. Outside the window a branch of ivy cracked sharply, but no one marked it.

'Ah, my holy father, do you see what an ass you were? What a fool to throw away Ludwig von Lichtenstein for the swine in Solgau — that bleeding hog!' He swung round and pushed Karl with his sword point. Then turning on the Capuchin: 'See, fool, confess it! Say you were wrong — you shall die the quicker. A shorter death for the dear holy ——'

There rang loud through the room a pistol shot; Adolf fell suddenly with a crash. Ludwig stag-

gered, as a pistol thrown through the window hit him on the head. There was a sudden, sharp cry below:

'*Poignardez!*' oaths and the crash of steel on steel, and Turenne sprang into the room.

'At last, *mon Prince,* at last,' he cried, and he thrust at Ludwig. Yolande had run to Karl and raised his head, and she was tearing her clothes to bind up his wounds; and the Capuchin came to help her. But Turenne had no thought of them; he lunged at Ludwig again and again, driving him back. More men came through the window. Turenne cried:

'Leave him to me,' and Ludwig, his pale lips trembling, tried to reach the door. His guard wavered for a moment, and Turenne, thrusting high and hard, ran him through the throat. Ludwig's sword fell with a clatter, and he staggered back against the wall. Turenne thrust at his throat again, and stood for a moment leaning on his sword.

'So, wife-killer!' he said through his teeth. He caught Ludwig by the waist and dragged him forward to the window.

'Look, look, you dog, at her grave!' and he pointed with his dripping sword to the little churchyard where Dorothea lay.

'I — I can — shut — my eyes,' said Prince Lud-

wig, gasping. He had done that all his life. Turenne let him fall to the ground. He looked round the room.

'I am sorry I could come no sooner, sir,' he said quietly to the Capuchin.

'You have done well to come,' said Père Joseph, holding out his hand. 'Do you bring a surgeon, Henri?'

'Fetch Armand,' said Turenne quickly, turning to his men. Below stairs was almost silence. 'The best we have, sir.' He bent himself over Karl, moving him very gently. 'Lady, I have seen men worse wounded live,' he said in a softer voice than he had cared to use since Dorothea was killed.

The lieutenant came quickly up the stairs:

'All done, sir!' he said sharply to Turenne, and as he knelt beside Karl, Turenne turned away:

'A rope, a rope, sergeant; make short!' he cried. 'Bring the dog out!' and two men caught Ludwig up roughly.

In the twilight they carried the dying man away, and hanged him on a great oak by the churchyard side. Turenne stood watching for a moment, and turned away with a smile.

And the moon rose pale and cold behind the beeches, while the flickering shadows grew and grew darker; and the cold blue light poured down

on the great oak, shining on the body that still swayed gently with a dark red stain at the throat, and casting a long quivering shadow that fell across the grave and the gravestone where the dead man's wife was buried — the wife that he had killed. But she would not have had it so.

CHAPTER XXX

THE COMTE DE LORMONT GOES RIDING

'EH? What? Oh, you have got him!' shouted Zwicka pushing forward through his men in the darkness.

'Yes, Colonel. Have you a surgeon?' said Turenne quietly.

'Surgeon? Yes, we carry them somewhere. Pass the word for the surgeon. So you caught him. Stuck him? Hanged him! *Gott!* good!' said Zwicka with a laugh, coming down from his saddle with a thud. 'If my brutes could have carried us five more miles a day I'd have burnt him! Who wants the surgeon? Rather too late for Ludwig!'

'The Count of Erbach is badly wounded.'

'What, Ludwig again? Fiends of hell, and you only hanged him? Well, well: the Count's tough, I guess. He should have waited for me.'

'He hurried to save Père Joseph,' said Turenne.

'K-Karl of Erbach — save Père Joseph ——'

Zwicka said stuttering over the words. 'God's own devil!' and he said many more things of the same colour not at all to the purpose. 'Well: here's the surgeon. See here, little man: the Count of Erbach is badly wounded. Rake up your brains. There's ten crowns for you when he is on his legs.' The surgeon bowed. 'Run away. I know your back bends.'

'You grow generous, Colonel,' said Turenne.

'Eh? Oh you mean I'm not. *Gott!* why waste money? But, by the fiend, I would give twice that to see him well! You should hear the way he caught Ludwig! I would give a night's wine to have seen it! Dragged his carronades up the hills, hid 'em, only let Ludwig see a handful of men — heavenly — heavenly! Well, is Père Joseph awake? I've got some damned letter for him. Eh, where is it? Oh! Push my belt round, sergeant!' By the aid of the sergeant Zwicka's belt was persuaded to move round its master's body, and Zwicka puffing opened the pouch that hung from it and brought out Bernhard's despatch. 'There: good reading that is. I suppose we sleep in the fields. I shall go and seize the castle to-morrow. Good-night to you. Sorry I did not do it myself. Files about there!' he swung himself slowly up and they clattered away.

In the morning Lormont had a letter to read: 'My dear Léon, — You will be gratified to learn that the wife-killer is hanged. My dreams were to the purpose. You will not be gratified to hear that he nearly killed the good father before I killed him; perhaps you may be sorry that Karl of Erbach is badly wounded. There is some hope. If you have a surgeon at Solgau who is anything better than a fool bring him; in any case I am to bid you come yourself to Père Joseph — who is unhurt and appears to have something for you to do. That no doubt will annoy you. In some haste — as you also should come. TURENNE.'

'So; the old Henri again,' said Lormont to himself. 'Pierre, bring my boots. I will put them on myself. I want all the surgeons in Solgau, and I want them at once. Also horses for them. You will endeavour to be quick.' Pierre ran out, and Lormont pulling on his boots said aloud to himself: '"There is some hope, there is some hope." My God, there must be hope. Eh, I believe I should be very sorry if — that — man — died.' He stood up and threw his cloak about him. 'I wonder what he was doing at Waldkirch. I suppose that tale was true: he did beat Ludwig.' He went out and stood in the courtyard waiting. His grooms

brought out some half-dozen horses. Lormont mounted, and rode slowly up and down the courtyard. Pierre came back running with two men panting at his heels.

'Two, sir — all I could find, sir,' he said panting.

'So; you have your tools, my friends?' The surgeons bowed. 'Now we are going to Waldkirch, and we are going to gallop.'

'But I shall fall off, sir,' cried one of them.

'Tie the gentleman on, Pierre,' cried Lormont over his shoulder; but the surgeon started back.

'I — I — I will do my best,' he stammered.

'I think you will,' said Lormont sharply. 'Mount, my friend.'

They trotted quickly away, and Lormont, riding behind them, tried to give them a confidence they did not feel, and he drove them along as fast as was safe. At last they came near Waldkirch; outside the village a crowd of men were at work digging.

'What is this, sergeant?' cried Lormont as he rode by.

'Graves, sir,' shouted the sergeant.

'Eh, Henri has been here,' said Lormont.

Turenne came out of the inn as they rode up.

'Here are my surgeons, Henri; they have ridden very well,' cried Lormont. Turenne smiled.

'As I see. Let them come in at once. Père

Joseph waits for you, Lormont. Come, compose yourselves'; he led them walking rather shakily away.

'Is he — worse, Henri?'

'Better so far as there is change,' said Turenne turning. 'Why, you seem interested, Lormont?'

'I incline to believe that I am,' Lormont answered brushing the dust from his cloak. 'It is probably foolish, but ——'

'Will you come up, Lormont?' said the Capuchin from the head of the stairs. For once in his life Lormont went up three steps at a time.

'You are quite safe, sir?' he cried; and Père Joseph smiling answered:

'You look as if you were glad?'

'Why I am a poor hypocrite, my father,' said Lormont, and he stood for a moment holding Père Joseph's hand. Both of them were smiling, and each of them was a little amused at himself.

'I have been saved by the Count of Erbach,' said the Capuchin slowly, sitting down and drawing his gown over his knees.

'That man was born to puzzle us!' cried Lormont. 'But, my father, what have you all been doing? How is it you have fallen so far in the debt of Karl of Erbach?'

'He was born to trouble us,' said the Capuchin.

'He kept Solgau from our alliance long. Then he was faithful to us when he had much excuse for breaking faith. Now he has saved me, and all but died to do it. You are perfectly right, Lormont, he was born to trouble us. And now the next move is ours. What is our game?' His eyes were bright and his hand tapped quickly on the table. Less than twenty-four hours ago he had given up hope of life.

'Ah, but how are the pieces, sir?' said Lormont. 'I have heard a tale that Karl had beaten Ludwig; that — is that in our accounts too?' The Capuchin handed him a dispatch.

'Your Excellency, — I have the honour to announce to you that I have dispersed the army of the Marquis Galeazzo. He escaped.

'I left the Marshal of Solgau with a small force to watch Ludwig. He did. Ludwig with a force out-numbering the Marshal's by three to one pressed on. It is my duty to inform your Excellency that Ludwig's whole army has been destroyed — in part killed and in part captured — by the Marshal of Solgau. I find myself entirely unable to represent to your Excellency the debt which Solgau and France and I myself owe to this commander. The success of the present campaign, by which the whole country has been cleared of its enemy's troops, is to be

ascribed to the Marshal of Solgau. — BERNHARD, DUKE OF WEIMAR.

'Given from the castle of the Schwartzsee.'

Below was another letter in a careless sprawling hand, very different from the regular studied writing of the despatch.

'My very dear Father, — And that is less than the truth. The man has done a miracle. Lichtenstein lies in my hand. It is very sad. I hoped to meet Ludwig myself. I believe Karl is most foolishly honest. Is it impossible that for once we should be honest too? If he had chosen to throw us over we should have had a very tiresome little war. He was fool enough to keep faith. Shall we answer a fool according to his folly? I like to pay debts. — B.'

'Faith, sir, we are all in a tale!' cried Lormont. 'Karl stalks about with that grim jaw of his and the steel eyes, and we all try to push him into the chair — eh, and he will not sit! But you — how came Karl and Ludwig here?' and the Capuchin told him.

'So, Lormont, there was everything that should have made him leave me to Ludwig — and — he fell — at that doorway — in my cause.' Lormont rose and walked to the window.

'I believe — I have nothing to say,' he said in a low voice. 'I do not know that I could have done it. It appears to me that we are in a singularly shameful case. If we can ask a man to give up more for us than his work and his life and his love I do not know what it is. He did that; we are, I presume, to give him nothing. I feel very proud of France.'

'You seem to be talking to persuade me,' said Père Joseph quietly.

'If Karl has not persuaded you at all, it is not likely that I shall do anything,' said Lormont without turning.

'And you talk very well,' said Père Joseph. 'Have you ever thought of why I went to Hilpertsee?'

'You are always so frank, sir, that I was sure of being told.'

'This morning a courier came from Paris,' said Père Joseph. 'Now, Lormont, I can do what I will with Solgau.'

'And for that is Solgau to be grateful?' said Lormont quickly.

'I do not know that Solgau has been very anxious to have our will done,' said the Capuchin, looking at Lormont.

'The Council are fools,' cried Lormont. 'I ——'

'Ludwig was a fool.'

'Karl said to me once, sir, "I would have peace." The answer to that does not come from the Council.'

'And you ask me for an answer?' said the Capuchin slowly. Lormont bowed.

'I do not forget; and I too like to pay debts. The Count of Erbach lies below, and I think the Lady Yolande of Rosenberg is tending him. If he dies ——'

'I do not think he will die,' said Lormont quickly. 'Things do not work like this so that he should die.'

'I pray that that is true,' Père Joseph answered gravely. He paused a moment, then looked full at Lormont: 'There is no heir now in Lichtenstein, and there is no heir in Solgau.'

'Behold the works of Ludwig von Lichtenstein,' said Lormont.

'God has strange tools, Lormont. But if the Count of Erbach lives, here would be a strong State full on the frontier of France, and from that State France would ask only that no enemy should pass through her land to attack our frontier. But lest that should happen here is the Council of Solgau. I have tried to work with the Council of Solgau. I have failed.'

'I — ah! — I remember saying once, sir,' said Lormont, 'it is very foolish of me, and at times

embarrassing — but I always remember what I say — well, sir, I find myself too interesting! I said once that hard things were not for you to do. I said it, of course, because I did not believe it. I wonder if you would tell me whether you thought of this before Karl came to Waldkirch or after?' Père Joseph smiled.

'I am not sure that I know, Lormont. And there is an answer after your own heart. But — there remains the Council of Solgau.'

'Why, yes, sir; there — remains — the Council of Solgau,' said Lormont, slowly twitching his ruffles. 'The Council of Solgau is to us a stumbling-block and moreover foolishness. Councils always are. It is strange; when half a dozen men come together to decide they bring all their folly with them, and each leaves his wisdom behind. Eh, and it would be light in the hand.' Père Joseph sat silent; the fingers tapped gently on the table, and a smile began to come about his lips. 'Once upon a time, sir, I made a promise. Beyond doubt it is foolish to make promises, and that is probably why I made it. A more foolish thing is that I have not kept it. I am doubtless extremely amusing, sir, but I am going to say something in the end. It occurs to me that you will never do anything with the Council. You said they were afraid of you — and

indeed I have some pity for the Council. Now, as the Council are fools, would it not be most fitting that the Council should talk with me? We should have a common feeling — if no common sense.'

'You spoke of a promise, Lormont,' said Père Joseph and his mouth twitched.

'I believe I did, sir; I think it would be kept if I were to talk to the Council. I should prefer to keep it. I think you have seen the Lady Amaryllis.'

'You think you will keep it?'

'I am doubtless vain, sir; and it would be most presumptuous in me to succeed. But I am not Père Joseph; and so, sir,' he yawned and patted his ruffles, 'why should the Council be afraid of me?'

'You will have your reward, Lormont,' said the Capuchin.

'My master and mistress are kind,' said Lormont. He rose. 'Now the one thing is that Karl should not die.'

'You are confident.'

'Who am I, sir, to distrust a man so trusted as ——' He bowed with a vast flourish, and ended with his hand on his heart.

'But I am not the Council, Lormont,' said Père Joseph and smiled.

Karl lay pale and listless in the big room below, with Yolande watching by his side. He had no

strength to speak, and his tired eyes were closed. He was not thinking; he was unconscious of sorrow or joy; but he had a great resolve to live. Yolande sat by the bed looking at his calm face with tender eyes. She would not let herself think that he could die; she had no thought for the future at all, and she sat tending him as a mother cares for her child.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE COMTE DE LORMONT PLAYS THE FOOL

'YELLOW and salmon-pink,' said the Comte de Lormont thoughtfully. 'There is a certain fatuity about yellow and salmon-pink. Ah! bring me the crimson breeches, Pierre. My very dear friend, that is purple. So. And the sky-blue riband. No; there is an air of decision in crimson, and the blue adds a touch of sternness. You may assist me to put on the salmon-pink breeches. Thank you. My legs, my dear friend, are of equal length. It is inconvenient in putting on breeches, but has compensating advantages. Thank you. Now we will look at the stockings. I think we will consider the yellow stockings. Those? They have a brown clock. Contemplate the sobriety of a brown clock. An excellent stocking for confessions, but—— Ah, hold that up. Yes, the clock is a pleasing variety of pink bird with which I am not acquainted. I will enter into the pink birds. I believe, Pierre, I shall never teach you to tie ribands. Endeavour to lend character to your bows; we desire now to indicate frivolity. So. You perceive?'

'Monsieur requires a vest,' said Pierre.

'You are so coarse, Pierre. Monsieur does not dress for himself. Art requires a vest. What has Pierre to offer to art? My dear friend! Who could wear rose pink with —— Pierre, you distress me. Ah, the Gods are with us! I perceive also that the Council is waiting. The green vest with the yellow flowers. Now the cream velvet with the fleur de lys. There is something wanting. Yellow ruffles? Oh, Pierre, shall I wear the jaundice? The apple green, my friend; quickly! So, so,' he patted them gently and turned round before the glass. 'My cane; thank you. Endeavour to look more foolish, Pierre. Bend your great wit to your master's level. Pick up that box of despatches. Open the door — and for God's sake look a fool!'

Master and man passed slowly along the corridors, and Lormont said softly:

'You perceive that usher, Pierre? Look like him. Now go to him and remark that the Comte de Lormont waits on the High Council.' Lormont sat down lazily and yawned.

'The High Council of Solgau will give audience to Monsieur le Comte de Lormont,' said the usher with a pompous bow.

'Eh?' said Lormont yawning in his face. 'Oh,

yes; of course,' and he rose lazily leaning on his stick. Thrusting out his chest and turning out his toes, he walked slowly into the room and bowed to the President, the Count of Hilpertsee. The Count rose and bowed clumsily in answer. Lormont, with a new flourish for each, bowed to all in turn, and concluded with a sweeping bow to the room. The Council bowed again all out of time. Lormont, standing with his head bent low, yawned.

'Pray be seated, monsieur,' said the Count of Hilpertsee.

'Yes. Thank you. I am highly honoured,' said Lormont, bowing to him again with copious flourishes, and the Count bobbed his head. Lormont sat down.

'You asked for an audience, monsieur?' said the Count.

'Yes, yes; of course. Pierre!' he looked vaguely all round him. 'Where is that box, Pierre?' he said peevishly. Pierre put it down on the table in front of him. 'Oh, yes; now you may go. Oh, Pierre! where is the key?'

'Monsieur has it,' said Pierre.

'Have I? Yes, yes; of course. Why do you worry me? Go, you fool; you detain the Council.' Pierre went out. Lormont leant back in his chair and yawned.

'I believe you had some proposal to make,' said the Count of Hilpertsee.

'Had I? Oh, yes,' he opened the despatch box and fumbled among the papers. 'Yes, the Prince von Lichtenstein's army was destroyed at the Schwartzsee,' he looked up from his papers and smiled amiably at the Council.

'We knew that, monsieur,' said the Count gruffly.

'By the Marshal of Solgau,' said Lormont, and yawned. 'He says — where is it? — yes, he says that it was a remarkable victory. Cannot speak too well of the Marshal of Solgau — yes, and so on. Paragraphs of adjectives.'

'Who says so?' growled the Count.

'Why the Duke of Weimar. I told you.' There was a little stir round the table, and some of the Council whispered to one another. Lormont still turned over his papers. The Count spoke to the Secretary and leant back in his chair.

'Yes, yes; magnificent,' said the Secretary. 'But you had something else to say, monsieur?'

'Yes, I had,' drawled Lormont. 'Very tiresome these papers. I never can find anything in papers,' and he flung some down pettishly.

'Yes, yes; of course. Never can read other people's writing,' said the Secretary. 'But the

Council is waiting, monsieur: must get on, must get on.'

'Ah, yes; just so,' drawled Lormont. 'I am very sorry for the Council. I am afraid I shall tire them horribly. It tires me.'

'Yes, yes; that is my view,' said the Secretary. 'But we must get on. Never get done. Very hard to get at the facts, but must do it, you know.'

'You are perfectly right, Doctor,' said Lormont. 'Ah, this is it. I wished to represent to the Council that the throne in Solgau — well, it is empty, is it not?' and he looked up and smiled fatuously at the Council.

'Yes, oh yes; very true,' said the Secretary nodding. 'But — er, nothing new in that.'

'No, I suppose not, drawled Lormont. 'But — ah! — I believe when the Council considered it before there were some doubts raised about one of those who — who would be — be in the field, you know. Well, they — those doubts — are they doubts still?'

'Very well put, monsieur; but — er — not very clear.'

'Oh — I think that some people said the Marshal of Solgau was a coward. He — he is rather an uncommon kind of a coward, is he not?' He looked at the Count of Hilpertsee.

'We know that was wrong,' said the Count gruffly.

'Well, you see, of course you are the Council of Solgau, and so it seems rather well that you should know. I suppose you have not chosen anyone for the throne?'

'The throne is empty,' said the Baron von Rosenberg.

'That seems such a pity,' said Lormont. 'I suppose you have seen, you know, we think the Count of Erbach is — he is at least a man who has proved himself. I had hoped you might have chosen him?'

'You are frank,' said the Count gruffly, looking at Lormont. The Secretary whispered to him, and the Count nodded.

'Yes, of course, much better to be quite frank,' said the Secretary; and the Council admired their diplomatist; they knew he was the only one among them, and thought he was the only one in the room. 'Get on much better: must get on. Keep the Council here all day. Never get done. Why did you hope, monsieur?'

'Eh? Oh, come, Doctor, let us both be frank. I tell you our view. What is yours?' The Secretary whispered with the Count.

'Of course things have changed,' said the Secre-

tary. 'Things change, of course you must change with them. *Tempora mutantur,* you know.' Lormont nodded gravely.

'Ah, just so,' said he. 'Ah! I suppose I may go on,' and he looked at the Secretary doubtfully.

'Yes, yes, of course; that is my view.'

'Well, you see, there is no heir in Lichtenstein. The Marshal of Solgau conquered Lichtenstein. Duke Bernhard holds it — ah yes, "in his hand." These soldiers are so picturesque. We thought, you know, same man Prince of Lichtenstein and Solgau — ah, I ask pardon — Prince of Solgau and Lichtenstein. Solgau has served us well, you know.' On the Council of Solgau he smiled amiably.

'Yes, oh yes, magnificent,' cried the Secretary, and all the Council were whispering together. 'But let us be frank, monsieur: what will France gain?' And the Council admired their cunning Secretary.

'Oh, I — I — I made no promise,' said Lormont. 'You see, it depends on the man whom you make Prince.'

'Of course, that is my view. You mean if the Count of Erbach were made Prince. But where does France stand, monsieur?'

'Oh, you have dragged it out of me,' cried Lormont pettishly, and a chuckle went round the room. The Council was very proud of its Secretary.

'No, no,' cried the Secretary. 'Much better to be quite frank, you know — know where we are.'

'Well, you see,' said Lormont, drawing his chair nearer and leaning across the table. 'If he is to be made Prince you must make him. We cannot do that. But if he were, you know, why then we might give you Lichtenstein.'

'But where does France stand?' growled the Count. Lormont laughed.

'Oh, we do not forget ourselves,' he cried, and looked knowingly at the Secretary. 'There would be a strong state on our frontier then. *Dame!* a very strong state, my lords! Well, we should ask the Prince to promise that the Emperor should not attack us through the lands of this new, strong realm. We should not lose!' and he laughed again.

'Yes, magnificent!' said the Secretary. 'But you would want the old treaty, too!'

'Pho! the old treaty!' said Lormont waving his hand. 'What is it? We would give that up for this new one.'

'What, what, do you promise that?' cried the Count.

'No, no,' said Lormont, shaking his head. 'You shall not catch me again. I said if the Count of Erbach were Prince.'

'Of course, of course,' said the Secretary and he rubbed his hands. 'Well, and if he were?'

'Why, I did not think we should get as far as this to-day,' said Lormont, leaning back. 'You dragged it out of me, Doctor. *Cordieu!* this is odd,' he laughed. 'I came to know what you were doing, and, oh, Doctor! I don't know much more than when I began. You told me to be frank, and, heavens! I have. It is your turn now. Who is to be Prince of Solgau?' The Secretary whispered to the Count of Hilpertsee. The Count leant over and spoke to some of the others, and with grave nods from them the Count said:

'Things have changed, monsieur, as the Doctor said. I will tell you as much as that.' Lormont bowed his thanks. 'I should not say what I have said of Karl of Erbach now. You have told us so much that we must know more. Would you promise this if he were to be made Prince?'

'Well, I suppose there is no harm in it,' said Lormont thoughtfully. 'I will promise, I do promise for France' — his drawl had vanished — 'that France will give you Lichtenstein, and be content that you should keep her frontier safe, if the Count of Erbach is made Prince.'

'Yes, yes, magnificent,' cried the Secretary. 'Now let us have that in writing.' He took up his

pen and wrote, while the Council talked eagerly, and Lormont played with his ruffles.

The Secretary gave his paper to the Count of Hilpertsee. The Count read it, passed it to Lormont, and Lormont as he read it and took up his pen smiled behind his hand.

'I believe that is all I came to do, Count,' said Lormont, rising and yawning. 'I fear I have tired you horribly just as I said. All this business is a cursed plague. By the way, I should be very glad to hear at once when you do come to a decision as to who is to be Prince.'

'You shall hear at once, monsieur,' said the Count gruffly, and Lormont with many bows went out.

The Council sat long, and it was drawing towards evening when the Secretary bustled into Lormont's room.

'Sorry to trouble you, monsieur, sorry to trouble you. I suppose you have authority from Père Joseph for this?' he gave Lormont the paper that was signed that morning.

'This appalling business!' drawled Lormont, leaning back in his chair to reach his despatch box. 'Now it is really very odd, Doctor, I suppose the good father must have thought you would ask for something like this. There! You perceive it is

exactly in your words. Great men, Doctor — think alike you know. "Joseph de Tremblay" "Lormont." He writes a worse hand than mine, but more trustworthy perhaps. He is one of those dreadful men who think of everything you know.'

'I may take this, monsieur?' said the Secretary quickly.

'Dear, dear, I should have given it you before. My memory, Doctor — bad, very bad.' The Secretary looked at him and chuckled.

'You a fool, you a fool!' he cried.

'Yes, that is my view,' said Lormont, and the Secretary went out laughing. Lormont lay back in his chair, smoothed his moustache and smiled. In about half an hour trumpets pealed out in the courtyard and Lormont started up. He flung open the window and looked out. There was a knock at the door and the Count of Hilpertsee entered.

'I have the honour to announce, Monsieur le Comte de Lormont ——' the trumpets drowned his voice and he stopped. 'That Karl, Count of Erbach, Marshal of Solgau, is made by the vote of the High Council Prince of Solgau.'

'And I am really glad to hear it,' drawled Lormont bowing, and the Count bowed gravely and went out. The trumpets sounded again and Lormont fell into his chair, stretched his hands out

over his head and burst out laughing. A herald was shouting in the courtyard.

'The dear good Council!' murmured Lormont and laughed again. Pierre ran into the room:

'Monsieur has heard ——' Lormont sprang up.

'A horse, Pierre!' he cried.

'Monsieur has heard!' said Pierre and ran out. Lormont drank off a glass of wine, caught up his hat and followed him. He met Amaryllis in the corridor; a bright-eyed, smiling Amaryllis. An Amaryllis who fell to laughing and cried:

'A rainbow, a walking rainbow!'

'An ambassador, a highly successful ambassador,' cried Lormont, and ran past.

'It is raining, monsieur,' said Pierre doubtfully, meeting him at the foot of the stairs.

'Bless the rain!' cried Lormont.

'But your clothes, monsieur?'

'Bless my clothes!' and Amaryllis, from a window, saw the rainbow gallop away through the mud to Père Joseph.

'Oh when he comes back ——' said Amaryllis.

CHAPTER XXXII

PÈRE JOSEPH IS FRANK

ZWICKA was bringing order to Lichtenstein. From the castle Duke Bernhard dealt justice to all; a justice that was stern and merciless, but still was justice. The strong hand that held the reins did not relax its grip when victory was won. Bernhard knew well enough that a country which was to be friendly to him was better left unravaged, and an evil fate befell those of his men who did not agree with him; and Zwicka rode hither and thither bringing a ready sword for all brigandage, and protection and peace for those who asked peace. Away on the southern border Turenne chased the remnants of Galeazzo's army, the men who had hoped for an easy life among the helpless villages. Few men found an easy life when the Vicomte de Turenne was in the saddle to fight them. Perhaps none of these men worked with less zeal because they knew they were working for Karl. But they would have laughed if they had heard it said.

And Karl lay at Waldkirch struggling slowly to win back his strength, while the trees began to

blossom and bud and the spring came again. Yolande was less often with him as he grew stronger and he noticed it, and was surprised. In the little inn at Waldkirch Père Joseph stayed too, and that also many people noticed and they, with more reason than Karl, were also surprised. But the old monk, who had played with the states of Germany and used them all in turn for his own ends, came every morning to see Karl. He said little, and what he did say seemed to have no great meaning. He was, as all the world would have supposed, very cold to the man who had saved his life. But, as no one but Lormont would ever have guessed, he was staying at Waldkirch only that he might hear every day of Karl. Meanwhile the Comte de Lormont laid the parallels for his assault on the High Council of Solgau.

Darkness was closing in on a wet April day when a man thundered up the causeway into Waldkirch, with the mud splashing high over his head. Wet and filthy and dismal to behold he ran up the stairs of the inn and came into Père Joseph's room.

'My father, my father, the rain of Solgau and the mud thereof!' he cried with a laugh. 'But indeed the Council are fools! And so am I, or I should never have come. Three trumpet peals, my

father: the cocks crowed thrice, and the herald brayed once, and Karl is Prince in Solgau!'

Père Joseph looked at him and smiled.

'You brought me the news first, Lormont?'

'The herald was before me with her. I was a rainbow when I started. She said so. Now — now I am a rainbow that requires excavation. I hope Karl will mend the roads.'

'Thank you, Lormont,' said Père Joseph and held out his hand. Lormont, brushing the mud from his fingers, took it. 'I think I have said that I do not forget.'

'Well, sir, I might ask you for a bath; and I might ask you for a dinner; but I think I will ask you for a horse. Rainbows, my father, come and go.'

So Lormont galloped back again to Solgau, and Amaryllis found that a rainbow can make you very happy, and most happy when it is very near you.

The next morning Père Joseph came to see Karl, as his way was, and found that Karl was sitting by the window, with a little colour in his face.

'You feel that you are stronger, Count?' he said gravely.

'Yes. I can move my arm without thinking about it for half an hour before,' said Karl with a smile.

'That is well,' said Père Joseph, and drew up

a chair beside him. 'Are you strong enough to hear news?'

'I have had no practice in that,' Karl answered. 'But there has been time for many things to happen, and I shall have to begin hearing some day. What is it?'

'I shall be quite frank, Count,' said Père Joseph and paused. A smile flickered about Karl's mouth.

'You are right,' said the monk quickly. 'It is not my way. I do not think I have ever been frank with you yet.'

'I incline to agree with you,' said Karl.

'You will remember, Count, that we have not always been friends.'

'It is only of late that I have begun to forget it,' said Karl.

'Yet you thought it worth while to save a man's life who had done you much harm at a cost which was great. That was very strange, Count.'

'I am sorry that I disappointed you,' said Karl gravely. 'Of course, if I had known your wishes — but it did not appear to me that I could have done anything else.'

'I said I should be frank, Count; and so I do not say that I was surprised. Once I offered you something that you would not take. I suppose you are still of the same mind?'

'You will not make me Prince,' said Karl quickly.

'No?' said the Capuchin. 'There was a time when the Council of Solgau thought you a coward. I never did. The Council have come to their senses.' Karl started.

'You may be frank, monsieur; but you think too highly of my intelligence. I do not know what you mean.'

'Yesterday, by the orders of the Council, you were proclaimed Prince in Solgau,' said the Capuchin, watching him.

There was silence in the room; outside in the ivy the sparrows were chattering.

'If this is your doing, monsieur,' said Karl slowly, 'if this is your doing, I am sorry. Perhaps it is fair that you should know, and I shall use no long phrases. I do not pretend that I care nothing for the throne. But I will tell you that if I am Prince in Solgau I may be a friend of yours but I cannot be a friend to France. If you have thought that I should be, it is better that I should decline to be Prince. I cannot take the throne by a trick; win it by your aid and cast you off.'

'I might tell you that I could not move the Council; and though you would doubt me you would find it true. I might tell you that it was the Council's own doing; and though the Council would

say so you would not believe them, and perhaps you would be not quite wrong. But you would be wrong in part. I will tell you all, if for no better reason because I think it is the only way to deal with you. I asked Lormont to tell the Council that if you were made Prince in Solgau France would add Lichtenstein to Solgau, and ask only this of you that you should keep our frontier safe. We would tear the old treaty. The Council then chose you Prince. I do not think my offer would have been enough of itself. But you proved yourself even to the Council at the Schwartzsee.' Karl sat silent, and the birds outside grew noisier.

'You are generous, monsieur,' said Karl.

'I try to be just,' said Père Joseph. There was silence again, and the Capuchin bent forward and laid his hand on Karl's. 'There is no trick, Count. If you will refuse I have no more to say. I have thought long how to make you an offer that you could take. I have thought of it every way and I see no reason why you should refuse, nor any more that we can give you. If you will not believe me, what is left? A fool leads Solgau, Solgau drags on with the war. I am left, saved by a man who will let me do nothing for him. I would give a year of my life, and there are few left, to make you Prince in Solgau.'

'I thank you, monsieur. I shall not refuse,' said Karl slowly; and Père Joseph leant back in his chair and sighed. The birds fluttered and chattered among the leaves and the April sun stole in round the cornice and Karl sat looking at the bright colours of the beech-wood. Max, Dorothea, Prince Eberhard, Ludwig, murdered and murderer, all lay dead: and over their graves the man who would have died to save those whom Ludwig had killed, who had all but died to avenge them, came to the throne that was theirs.

'I ought to say more,' said Karl at last. 'I see that I owe very much to you, and for myself and Solgau I thank you again. I shall hope to prove that you have done well.'

'I have,' said Père Joseph; and he rose. 'Before God and man Karl, Prince of Solgau has proved his honour and his faith.' And he went out.

In the afternoon came the Count of Hilpertsee with all the Council in his train, and one by one they knelt and kissed Karl's hand in the bare room in the inn and swore fealty to him as the Prince of Solgau.

But that night Yolande went back to Solgau, and Karl sat alone and wondered that she never came to him.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE PRAYER OF PRINCE LUDWIG

'Act five, scene one,' said the Comte de Lormont. 'What a singular feeling for colour resides among the good people of Solgau! How many different reds are there on that rope, Pierre?'

'Six, monsieur.'

'Ah, I made it seven. But then there are only six flags. There is something to be said for your view, Pierre. What is it I am on these occasions? Oh yes. Colonel of the Guard of Aquitaine. Pierre, construct the Colonel of the Guard of Aquitaine. Oh, that coat! I shudder afresh every time I see it. Messieurs of the Guard of Aquitaine, I salute you. You are no doubt worthy men; some day I shall hope to see you. But do you all wear pea-green? Pierre, it is very probable that you think me a fool, but it would be more decent to dissimulate. Pea-green and a golden fleur-de-lys! Oh, Messieurs of Aquitaine! Thank you, Pierre. Is this breakfast? There is this to be said for you, Pierre, that you appear to have made love to the

cook. Now that indicates a very prudent spirit. You may salute the cook, Pierre, on my behalf. Probably thus it would be more agreeable to both of us.'

'I am glad monsieur is pleased,' said Pierre bowing.

'I really believe you, and if you could come to believe that I do not always — no more — mean precisely what I say you would find — give me that enormous weapon: why Messieurs the Guard demand that I should wear a claymore I — ah yes, Pierre, you would find that you pleased me quite frequently. I believe I look sufficiently ridiculous' — he looked at himself in the glass.

'Monsieur is magnificent,' said Pierre.

'But monsieur is overwhelmed by his coat,' said Lormont. 'Monsieur Peapod, I am your servant. Alas, I am!' He went out and mingled with the throng in the courtyard.

'I am deeply distressed, Baroness; and I should be charmed to conduct you to the walls. But I see Père Joseph beckoning me. I am inconsolable, Baroness'; the lady passed on. 'She seems — she certainly will kill some one. It is like the march of Fate. Ah, there is the good father; and she will reach him before I can. I trust he will preserve his presence of mind. He has made her smile!

I always admired him. Ah!' he slipped through the crowd quickly. 'May I hope to conduct you to the walls?' Amaryllis and Yolande were together, but it was to Yolande that Lormont spoke.

'You are too unselfish, monsieur,' said Yolande smiling.

'I do not perceive it,' Lormont answered with a bow.

'An unconscious saint,' said Amaryllis studying the heavens.

'The Lady Amaryllis is fond of making me into many people,' said Lormont. 'No doubt she has a reason.'

'Oh!' cried Amaryllis shaking her head at him; and Lormont smiled. 'You are such a whirligig.'

'With a face on every side, and a mouth that — ah! — talks, yes, always talks.'

'It must get very tired,' cried Amaryllis.

'Do you think it does?' said Lormont. 'But I play the tortoise. It is a lovely part. Shall we move towards the walls? I have sword enough to escort forty.'

'You will sit with us, monsieur?' said Yolande; 'even though it is left to me to ask you,' and she smiled at them.

'I have always thought the Lady Amaryllis was shy,' said Lormont thoughtfully.

'You are so good a judge of shyness,' cried Amaryllis.

'I have seen so much of it. But if the walls can support this sword I ask for no better place.'

They came to the walls, and Lormont stood behind the two sisters looking down the long road that leads to the town. On either side the way was a thick crowd of peasants and common folk kept back by a long line of pikemen. Flags were strung across the road, fluttering gaily in the breeze, and a dull, steady noise came rolling up from the town. Soon flashes of light dancing up and down shone above the dust in the distance, and the noise came louder and nearer. Cuirassiers in flashing steel, with the blue and crimson plumes of Solgau fluttering from their hats, swept up the hill, opened to right and left, and halted in two parties on either side the gateway. The men were laughing and joking, leaning over in their saddles to speak to one another. A dull rumbling noise broke through the din; rolling slowly on came gun after gun with brown-clad drivers walking by their teams and the gunners marching behind. They passed into the gateway, wheeled round, and formed about the courtyard, while the crowd cheered wildly. These were the guns that had crowned the Schwartzsee hills.

'Do you remember, Lormont, that Ludwig von Lichtenstein said, a year ago, that he prayed that a Prince of Solgau might yet take more from Lichtenstein?' said Père Joseph.

'Ah, Ludwig did not pray often, I suppose, and when he did it was only fair to answer him.'

'It has been answered,' said the Capuchin gravely. 'And now our Prince of Solgau brings home the sceptre of Lichtenstein.' He smiled a little.

A regiment of pikemen came marching slowly up the hill, and musketeers after them, and pikemen again, all clad in the same dark blue with crimson ribands on their sleeves, and they passed away and halted round the walls. At last came more cuirassiers, and then a regiment on grey horses with heavy crimson tassels dangling from their bridles, and gold lace on their coats, the guard of the Prince of Solgau. A few paces after them Karl rode alone, bowing gravely in answer to the thundering cheers of the crowd. There was a quiet smile on his face, and he was thinking of how he had ridden away from the Castle only a few months ago. They came on and on, and the guard filed through the Castle gateway. Karl stopped, looking up at the walls, and suddenly he swept off his hat and bowed very low. Père Joseph bowed.

'But that was not meant for you, sir,' Lormont

whispered, bending over Amaryllis; and Amaryllis looked up at him and smiled. The guns in the courtyard roared a salute. The trumpets of the guard pealed thrice, and the swords of the guard clashed and came flashing out, and Karl rode back through the gateway Prince of Solgau.

The pageant was over; the men fell out easing their belts, and the crowd melted slowly away. They were very pleased with the pomp, and perhaps some of them did know that they had seen more than bright colours and flashing steel, and big horses and big men. Evil days were yet to come for Germany, and it may be that some of those who went home dusty and hoarse guessed, if they did not know, that the man who had ridden past them with a grave smile on his lips was well chosen to serve Solgau in a day of need, and to train men to walk in his own way when he was laid beside his fathers on the bare round hill at Erbach, where the grey granite cross looms high over the land for which he worked, and makes no inept monument of a man who was not broken by misfortune and not tempted by glory.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE LIGHT OF LIFE

'I BELIEVE one may bring a horse to the water. And I suppose it is partly the water that makes him drink,' said Lormont thoughtfully. 'Now, if I were to bring the horse, Peach-blossom, would you be a water-carrier?'

'I never saw such people!' cried Amaryllis.

'It is really the water that runs away,' said Lormont. 'I come leading that amiable square-jawed horse, and the water — the water dries up, I suppose? The hapless steed cannot run after a cloud. I do not profess to know much of this water, but it seems to be a singularly disappointing lady.'

'Of course he is Prince,' said Amaryllis thoughtfully.

'But so are we all — to our lady,' said Lormont. 'Even I, who am also monsieur — the ambassador. Now this is a very pleasing idea, Peach-blossom. The Prince has not had his due.' He bent over her, and she stepped away.

'Oh, the Prince kisses me on the cheek and I curtsey,' said Amaryllis, and she did her part.

'Hapless man! But you see, he is weak; he yields to temptation, and so ——' said Lormont, and Amaryllis was in his arms.

'Such a greedy Prince!'

'And that is treason; and he is a stern man; and his sentence is ——' so he kissed her again.

'Oh, I dare not say anything!' cried Amaryllis, looking up into his face with laughing eyes. 'You twist it — and then ——'

'And then?' said Lormont.

'And then — why I suppose it pleases you. No; please, Léon.'

'It is very hard; those eyes are sweetest when you ask me not to touch them. You are a cruel queen, Brown-eyes.'

She laid her head on his breast.

'Will that do?' she said softly, and she felt his arms strong about her. 'Ah, there is Yolande, see, on the terrace! Oh, and Karl is coming!'

'The strategic Karl; he holds the only way of escape. I think we will go away, Peach-blossom.' They wandered away through the garden. 'It has been a strange year, Peach-blossom. A year ago

there came to Solgau a lazy, lanky young man to see that Solgau was faithful to France. He has found most of his work in promising that France will be faithful to Solgau. He is always making promises, Brown-eyes.'

'He does like to talk so much,' said Amaryllis, laying her hand on his.

'Why, the poor wretch has so much to excuse in himself. Well, he has made his promises, and France has honoured the bill. He is indeed the most fortunate of men, if not singularly deserving. But if you ask who kept his promises, why, Brown-eyes, the gods are great.'

'Oh, I shall not flatter you,' cried Amaryllis, and smiled at him.

'Ah, but you have,' said Lormont, and slipped his arm round her. She nestled against him.

'Père Joseph tells sad tales of you, oh, sad tales, Léon,' said Amaryllis with a roguish smile.

'The good father is too frank,' and Lormont sighed.

'Yes; he says you would give him no peace, Léon; and he says you have a very persistent laziness. So you get what you want. I wonder if that is why you get what you want,' said Amaryllis thoughtfully, with her head on one side.

'Is that why?' said Lormont softly.

'Monsieur le Comte de Lormont is Monsieur le Comte de Lormont,' said Amaryllis. 'Of course, there may be another reason. Do the reasons matter, Léon?' and Lormont kissed her.

'Well, at least I think we have won in the end,' said Lormont in a moment. 'And it was no bad end, Peach-blossom, when Karl came in under the gateway.'

'Was that the end?' said Amaryllis, and looked towards the terrace and then into his eyes again, and Lormont smiled.

'There is witchcraft in Rosenberg,' said Lormont.

'Why only two girls,' Amaryllis cried.

'Only — two — girls.'

Yolande had heard a heavy step behind her as she stood looking down into the pool. She did not turn.

'I said it was just like your eyes, Yolande,' said Karl softly.

'That was long ago,' Yolande answered in a low voice.

'The pool has not changed. I have not changed. Have you?'

'I — I wish you would not say it,' said Yolande unsteadily, looking away from Karl. 'I know I was wrong. I know — I was very foolish — I

was very cruel. I — I am very sorry.' Her voice trembled and Karl saw her throat quiver. He put his arm round her, but she drew quickly away. 'Please, please do not speak to me.' Karl took her hands and held them and tried to look in her eyes, but she hung her head and a dark blush came up her neck.

'I must speak to you. My love, I ask nothing better in all the world than to make you happy.' Her head had fallen on her breast and the tears shone on her pale cheeks. Her hands lay cold in his. 'If you can say you do not love me, I go.' She trembled.

'No, no,' she cried shaking her head. 'You forget — you forget what I said — and now, and now; ah, I am ashamed!' Her blush grew darker, and she winced with pain. But Karl's eyes were flashing and he caught her in his arms.

'There is no shame here, love,' he whispered.

'I cannot, I cannot,' Yolande sobbed, and he felt her breast trembling.

'You cannot deny me,' said Karl softly. 'My love, my love, you must trust me; you will trust me.' He pressed her closer and she felt the strong clasp around her — felt his breast against hers.

'Ah!' she said with a sob, and all her body

trembled. She looked up into Karl's face with sad tender eyes grown dark with tears. 'Forgive me, Karl; forgive me!' she murmured, and her lip quivered. Karl kissed her mouth and her lips answered his.

'My life, my love, my princess,' he said, and she lay on his breast with his arms round her.

'My love,' she murmured, and lifted her head to kiss him. He led her to a seat in the wall and they sat together hand in hand in silence. The sun was setting behind the hills, and a last ray shone down on the vane of Rosenberg Castle and flashed over down and wood and meadow. The golden light flickered through the trees and fell about Yolande's white neck and bosom, and Karl smiled at her and kissed her.

'The light comes from Rosenberg, love,' said he, and she smiled and pressed his hand.

Twilight was falling when Amaryllis and Lormont came to the terrace together. Karl rose at the footsteps, but Amaryllis ran to Yolande and kissed her.

'You see I sometimes tell the truth,' said Lormont quietly.

'Yes, you said you spoke as my friend.'

'I wish your best friend joy,' said Lormont, and bowed to him. 'And one who is more than a

friend,' and he bowed low to Yolande. Karl held out his hand.

And Amaryllis, with her arm round Yolande's neck, cried:

'Oh, so solemn!'

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